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ASBESTOS: LICENCE TO KILL RENEWED

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Put not your trust in bankers

KEYNES once said that if you owe a bank £100 you have a problem, but if you owe it £1,000,000 then the bank has a problem. Or, as bankers themselves occasionally put it, if you owe the bank enough money then you own the bank.

Mexico certainly owes the bank enough money. And the 'rescue package' which was hastily assembled in New York last Friday was proof indeed that the banks are at the mercy of their debtor just as Mexico is at the mercy of the banks. The difference is that the banks' problems exist only on paper – it could be argued that their whole world is nothing more than a colossal pyramid of paper – whereas Mexico is a real country with real people living and dying in it.

Although some reports said that Mexico had come within a hair's breadth of bankruptcy, the truth is that the banks would never have forced the country into default – not because of any high-minded concern with the welfare of the Mexican people but simply because they don't want to lose their money. It is in the bankers' own interests to allow a country to reschedule its debts, as happened last year in Poland, Pakistan, Bolivia and Turkey, and as has happened in 20 countries so far this year, because this means that the bankers will get their money back, albeit a few months later than expected.

It is fitting that Mexico's crisis should have come to a head in the very week when soberly dressed men in the stock exchanges of New York and London were behaving like crazed moths flinging themselves at light-bulbs. For many years we have been assured that stock markets and banks are 'efficient' and 'responsible' in their financial behaviour. What is all too clear after last week's buying spree is that those who operate stock markets are greedy half-wits, interested only in short-term gains and uncaring about the effects of their actions. Similarly, the Mexican crisis has shown us the dangerous wildness of the world's bankers: one minute they are falling over themselves to lend money to a country, but the next they are desperately trying to get their money out again.

The Mexican crisis was precipitated by the fact that a large proportion of the country's debt consisted of short-term loans which were due for repayment. Mexico thus found itself having to pay the interest and capital on previous short-term loans by taking out further loans; these in turn had to be serviced and repaid, which meant borrowing yet more money. The cycle went faster and faster, and Mexico's development plans had to be gradually jettisoned as it devoted its resources to paying off the banks. Ironically, it was the high growth rate which had attracted banks to Mexico; yet the banks' activities effectively sabotaged the country's growth, even if this fact was obscured until the fall in oil prices plunged the government into a panic and caused a huge devaluation of the peso.

The International Monetary Fund has now stepped in to 'save' Mexico with a $4 billion loan, which will be granted only on condition that the government follows 'realistic' policies. The IMF has clearly learned nothing: when it last baled out Mexico, six years ago, it insisted that the government dismantle its long-standing system of import controls. The result was predictable. Imports rose rapidly and, as a consequence, so did external debts.

The conditions attached to the IMF's new loan will include a huge reduction in public spending. Britain has first-hand experience of what this means, from the time when the Labour government allowed the IMF to take over the Treasury in 1976. The consequences in Mexico, a country which has been trying to industrialise, will be much more disastrous. Thousands more workers will become unemployed, in a country where already more than 40 per cent of the adult population do not have full-time jobs. Prices of basic foods, which have doubled in the last month, will rise still higher as the government is forced to cut its subsidies again.

In the past, the improbably named Institutional Revolutionary Party, which has run Mexico for half a century, has bought off social unrest by awarding pay increases to members of the official trade union, the CTM, whenever prices rise sharply. In return, the CTM has been expected to dragoon workers into obedience. But this tactic may be no longer possible – partly because a sizeable minority of workers has left the bureaucratic CTM to join independent unions and partly because the IMF will not stand for pay increases anyway, since they are obviously inconsistent with what bankers like to call 'sound policies', even in a country where at least a third of the population lives at a level of bare subsistence.

Mexico is fortunate in that it does at least have oil reserves. But in other respects its condition is symptomatic of what is happening to more and more Third World countries: economic growth is being crippled by the burden of payments to bankers. As long as international financiers remain uninterested in planned, long-term investment, the poor nations will stay poor. □

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Severely disabled people are being fined for watching television. Bob Woffinden explains why

A Home Office trap

AS A BABY, Sybil Johnson suffered severe burns and the loss of an arm and a leg in a pram fire. Today, aged 35 and further afflicted by a mild form of epilepsy, she lives in a hostel for the chronically disabled. Last week she was taken to court for not possessing a £46 television licence.

She is one of several residents at the Cressey Fields Training Centre and Hotel in Alfreton, Derbyshire, who are campaigning for clarification of the muddled laws relating to the number of licences required in establishments with more than one television set.

Magistrates at Alfreton gave her a conditional discharge and ordered her to pay £7 costs. Their discomfiture over the case can be gauged from the fact that she was given fully six months to pay, and that it was not even made a condition of her discharge that she purchase a licence.

She does not intend to do so, and says she will go to prison rather than pay costs. Both the costs and the licence fee of the previous resident to be summonsed, Leslie Gale, a multiple sclerosis sufferer, were anonymously paid on his behalf; Sybil has emphasised that she does not wish this to happen in her case.

Cressey Fields, which is adminstered by Derbyshire County Council, has three communal television sets – for which it purchases, as required by law, a single licence – but many residents naturally prefer to watch their own set in their own room. It was in February, after Gale purchased a television for which he had been saving for over three years, that the Licence Inquiry Office, acting on behalf of the Home Office, began legal proceedings.

John Grant, the principal of Cressey Fields, says: 'The hostel is a Part III establishment under the terms of the 1948 National Assistance Act, and the residents are campaigning for parity with other Part III residences, such as old people's homes, which benefit from a licensing arrangement introduced by John Stonehouse, the then postmaster-general, in January 1969.' This allows pensioners who possess private TV sets while resident in specially-provided communal accommodation to pay a nominal 5p for an annual television licence.

The hostel inmates are effectively pensioners; they are unable to work because of infirmity, and they receive a state pension. Their only source of income is £5.90 a week 'pocket money'. They pay a statutory minimum charge for their accommodation, which is directly based on the level of social security they receive; thus, any increase in state benefits would mean they were no better off, and no better able to afford a licence.

The local Social Services Committee is supporting the residents, and the Home Office has provisionally agreed to meet a deputation on 17 September; Dennis Skinner, who lives just four miles from the hostel, will table a question to Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw when the House reassembles on 21 October.

At present, the Home Office is maintaining that 'residents in a disabled people's home are not eligible to benefit from the 1969 scheme, which was specifically applied to retired people of pensionable age'. (In [illegible] Tyneside, this principle itself has lately been subject to different interpretation by the local authority and the Home Office.)

The Cressey Fields argument has uncovered specific anomalies in the licensing provisions. Underlying all such disputes, however, is the general weakness of the system, which prescribes one licence per owner, rather than once licence per set. The London Weekend Television offices, the Houses of Parliament, the Savoy Hotel: all need purchase only one licence, irrespective of how many televisions they contain (over 200, in the case of the Savoy).

At the time of the last licence increase, in December 1981, shadow home secretary Roy Hattersley drew attention to this. A double room at the Savoy, he said, cost £85 per night; if the cost of an individual TV licence were added, the room would cost £85.13 – hardly an exorbitant increase. Hattersley advocated an enhanced licence fee for all commercial use, which could raise as much as £50 million a year. Whitelaw replied that his proposals would be examined. This week, nine months later, the Home Office told me that these are 'still under review'. □

Marie Cahill looks at a row over a new film which associates the peace movement with terrorism

SAS shoots CND

JOAN RUDDOCK, chairperson of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, has asked Princess Alexandra not to attend the premiere of the anti-CND film *Who Dares Wins* this week.

In a letter to the princess, she says: 'I feel the makers of this film may not have fully informed you about the nature and the contents of their work. *Who Dares Wins* has a strong and quite deliberate CND message, associating our campaign and its world famous symbol with East European inspired terrorists.' Joan Ruddock adds that the film 'is a slur not only on CND as an organisation but on its hundreds of thousands of supporters across the British Isles'.

The film shows a fictitious terrorist group, the People's Lobby, which is committed to achieving the abolition of nuclear weapons by murder and violence, using CND as a cover. Its members invade the US ambassador's residence, but then the SAS are summoned to make Britain safe for democracy and the arms race. Nowhere in the film are CND's true nature and methods properly represented.

Equity members who belong to CND are to picket the Odeon in Leicester Square, where the film is showing. They say that *Who Dares Wins* promotes the idea that pressure groups are a threat to democracy and that Britain needs a permanently armed police force aided by increased use of the armed forces during any public demonstration. □

See films, page 24

Missing issues

Because of despatch problems at our printers some subscribers may not have received their copies of *NS* issues dated 13 and 20 August. If you are a subscriber and your copies of these issues have not yet arrived, please let our subscription department know and they will send replacements.

Our apologies to subscribers who have been affected.

Michael Coren on a union's new rules

Left fears persecution

THE BROAD LEFT inside the Union of Communications Workers says that the union's executive is 'cracking down' on its activities.

The union's rules revision conference last week passed two motions which will seriously hamper the Broad Left's ability to operate. One, which passed by the narrow margin of 7770 votes to 7508, stated that 'no other meeting or conference shall be empowered to discuss the business of the union unless authorised to do so under the national rules'. Another said that 'the name of the Union of Communications Workers or the initials UCW shall not be used in the title or description of any other organisation or publication without the authority of the executive council'.

The UCW's Broad Left was formed two years ago and has about 500 supporters, grouped roughly around the policies of Tony Benn.

The UCW denies harassing the Broad Left. A press officer said that the conference decisions 'could get at the Broad Left or Broad Right or even the National Front – we're considering all our members and not just a group like this'. □

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Is the army above the law? Fiona Mallon reports on a Northern Irish case

Anger over boy's death

NORTHERN Ireland's Director of Public Prosecutions is being heavily criticised for his decision not to press charges against a soldier alleged to have fired the plastic bullet which killed an eleven-year-old Derry boy last April.

Stephen McConomy died three days after he was hit on the head by a plastic bullet, fired during a riot in the Bogside. The decision not to prosecute is criticised on the grounds that strict army regulations, which say the rounds must be fired at a range of not less than 20 metres (except where the safety of soldiers is threatened), had allegedly been broken.

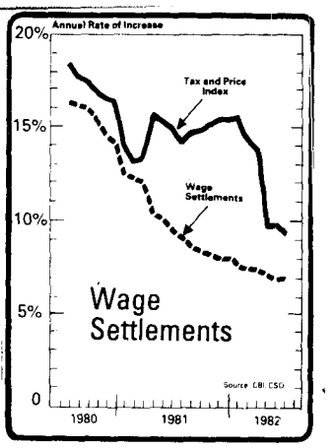
The Bishop of Derry, Dr Edward Daly, added his voice to the critics last weekend and asked for public explanation. He said: 'This case is a culmination of many similar cases – more than ten people have died, with many others seriously injured. To date nobody has been charged with firing these missiles. In many cases, it appears to me there has been a clear breach of the army's own regulations.' He added that if the police or army break the law 'they must be answerable like any citizen'.

The Belfast Telegraph, the province's moderate unionist paper, condemned the decision in an editorial last week. 'Even those who accept the neccessity for an effective form of defence for security forces in riot situations cannot be happy with the bald statement of the DPP's conclusions,' it said. 'After a series of plastic bullet deaths leading to legitimate fears about its use, the public deserve a fuller explanation of the reasons why charges cannot be brought.'

The editorial suggested that the case could be raised in Westminster if the matter raised an awkward precedent for the DPP. Alternatively the McConomy family can bring a civil action.

A reply from the Northern Ireland Office said the government stood by their view that plastic baton rounds were an effective way of controlling serious rioting. The practice is 'consistent with the minimum use of force.'

The boy's mother, Mrs Maria McConomy, has called off a threatened hunger strike aimed at focusing attention on the case. The main reason for her decision was the welfare of her other two sons, and 'the realisation that a hunger stike would fail to draw a response from an inflexible British government'. □



Jane Houlton reveals the truth about pay rises and inflation

Standards of living falling, says CBI

WAGE INCREASES are still falling short of inflation, according to the latest information from the CBI Databank. Settlements for June 1982 averaged just over 7 per cent – 2 per cent below the comparable increase in the Tax and Price Index (TPI). These data include the private sector and nationalised industries, but exclude central and local government.

The rate of pay increases has been declining continuously over the last two years, as the graph shows. Wage settlements were averaging over 16 per cent in July 1980, compared to 7 per cent now. Wages tracked inflation (the TPI) on its downward path until they diverged in March 1981, when first indirect tax increases in the Budget and then retail price increases drove inflation up again.

The gap between inflation and wages reached its widest point in January this year, when pay increases were falling 8 per cent behind the rise in the cost of living. That gap has now closed, but not completely.

According to the CBI, there is no going rate and wage settlements range widely around the average – mainly between 4 and 10 per cent. Very few employees have actually managed to maintain or improve their standard of living at all. In manufacturing, for instance, only 6 per cent of agreements since August 1981 won increases better than inflation.

Settlements in manufacturing average just under 7 per cent, while employees in the financial sector are doing better with around 9 per cent. Employees in catering and leisure are doing worse, with 5 to 6 per cent. □

Patrick Wintour on the unanswered questions about Labour's 'register'

What does it all mean?

JIM MORTIMER, General Secretary of the Labour Party, has refused a request from the left-wing pressure group, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, to clarify the criteria by which non-affiliated groups will be registered and thus permitted to operate within the Labour Party. The LCC had written to Mr Mortimer on 23 July, attacking the register for introducing 'ill-defined criteria of acceptability which do not appear in or derive from the Party Constitution'.

The LCC argued in its letter that the questionnaire asserted that all groups had to be 'acceptable' to the NEC, yet it did not define acceptability; the NEC insisted that all groups had to be 'open and democratic', but it did not explain these terms either – although the questionnaire could be read as implying that all meetings of all groups had to be open to all members.

The LCC also asked what the NEC meant by 'internal discipline' and by the unacceptability of 'association with any international organisation not supported by the party or the Socialist International'. Would non-registration be a disciplinary offence? Finally, the LCC expressed its hope that Mr Mortimer would clarify these points to 'dispel some of the confusion and in order that members of the LCC can make their decisions on registration in the light of all the facts'.

Mr Mortimer replied: 'I feel sure that it is possible to determine whether a group is acting within the constitution without me trying to define in advance every possible circumstance in which difficulties might or might not arise..

'I assure you that the intention of the NEC is to uphold the constitution of the Labour Party and not to trip up members of groups by insisting upon narrow definitions of words and phrases.'

Further attempts by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy to secure some kind of definition of eligibility were thwarted by the Party's Conference Arrangements Committee on Monday. By two votes to three they voted to rule out of order 12 amendments sponsored by the CLPD calling for a year's deferment of the register issue until the NEC had prepared amendments to the party constitution defining the eligibility of non-affiliated organisations. This would have delayed discussion of a highly divisive issue at party conference for a year.

The CAC ruled the amendments out of order for two reasons. First because they were said to cover two subjects and second because all constitutional amendments had to be submitted by 2 July. The CLPD argue that amendments have been accepted later than that in the past and that anyway the Militant Tendency Report was not published until 23 June. This gave constituencies less than a fortnight to convene and submit amendments on the register proposal. The decision of the CAC can only be over turned at conference by a reference back on the floor of the conference. □

Fiona Mallon shows why workers collapsed in Barnsley

Falling down on the job

A SPATE of collapses by women workers at a Barnsley factory two years ago was caused by solvent poisoning, it has been revealed. A report by Dr Michael Flindt, a consultant in occupational medicine, has found that the mysterious illnesses at a Dunlop-owned sports factory were almost certainly caused by two solvents, toluene and SPB-7, which were in use at the time.

Theories of 'mass hysteria' put forward by industrial doctors have been dismissed. The report says the women affected were all 'mature well-balanced individuals who did not attempt to overdramatise their symptoms'.

Eighteen months after the incident, 75 per cent of tnose most affected still complain of personality changes, depression, loss of confidence, impaired memory and a reduced ability to handle figures. Scientific tests have confirmed many of these symptoms, showing lower blood counts and higher depression ratings. Dr Flindt says that most of the women will slowly recover but some of them may never return to normal.

Phil Knowles, Regional Health and Safety Officer for the GMWU, says that the report completely vindicates the claims made by union members at the time. The union is pressing compensation claims.

The International Sports Company, for which the women worked, has already been fined £1,600 by Barnsley Magistrates Court on four charges of failing to ensure the health and safety of employees. There have been significant improvements in the departments where the incident occurred. Toluene was dropped immediately after the collapses and SPB-7, although still in use, is carefully monitored.

Dr Flindt's report stresses the need to take individual complaints seriously and not be misled by symptoms which appear to be like everyday complaints. He says workers should not expect a job to involve 'feeling tiddly or fainting as a natural part of the work'. □

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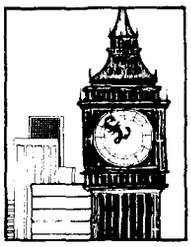

PATRICK WINTOUR

Can Sheffield turn back the Tebbit tide?

THE LEADERS of Sheffield City Council have a strong line in socialist gesture. They put out red flags above the City Hall on May Day, they take council braziers to picket lines, they advertise welfare rights on local radio, they travel down to London to argue with Norman Tebbit that he should allow the council to create jobs with the £5m it costs him annually to keep 1,000 people unemployed, and they are trying to turn the City Hall inside out. By this, I do not mean they are trying to turn the City Hall architecturally into some kind of Beaubourg, but that, previously, City Halls tended to service themselves rather than the people of the city.

As Bill Michie, the chairman of the council's employment committee, puts it: 'We're trying to turn the City Hall into a resource for the people of the city and to get council workers to go out and help the people. In the old days no council worker ever left the City Hall except to go home.'

The most striking example of this outwardness has been the establishment of a 30-strong Department of Employment made of 'lawyers, accountants, researchers, organisers and economists'. It is the first in the country, though its coordinator John Bennington says that every council in the country might have something similar by the 1990s. The Department is not the traditional 'Invest in Sheffield, heartland of Yorkshire' outfit: Bennington thinks such enticement of footloose investment is not cost effective.

The immediate reason for setting up the Department is, of course, the rise in unemployment in Sheffield and the collapse of the city's traditional steel engineering industries. But the long-term aim is to try to gain 'more direct local democratic control over employment and to impose a greater degree of social planning upon the structural and technological changes that take place in Sheffield'. One of the two full-time political strategists working for the Council, Geoff Green, describes the goal self-mockingly as a socialist version of Mussolini's Italy.

With a budget of little over £2m – mainly the product of a 2p rate – such aims sound a trifle grandiose. International steel capital is hardly going to restructure in a social way courtesy of some loose change in the City's Treasury Department. The Labour GLC, for instance, spent nearly £2m saving just 400 jobs in one London East End furniture factory. Bennington concedes that, in the absence of pension fund cash, the council simply does not have the resources to turn the unemployment wave around or take major stakes in local industry. He was appointed in September – a full staff was in place in the spring – and in that year the council claims to have saved or created 1,000 jobs in around 100 firms (800 applications for aid had been received). But Bennington admits that there has had to be an increasing shift in the Department from job creation work after jobs have been lost to providing resources to try to prevent job loss.

Last week the Department faced one of its first major tests. On Friday Firth Brown, part of Johnson Firth Brown, announced that it would merge its forging capacity with BSC's River Don works in Sheffield. By October 700 jobs would go. As part of a government-inspired rationalisation programme for steel, the merged group would be under private control, in the same way that GKN and BSC merged their wire rod interests in 1980.

The closure will wipe out virtually a whole year of the Department's job creation work. It is also a classic example

One of the council's strategists describes the goal self-mockingly as a socialist version of Mussolini's Italy

of the kind of closure the city has to fight. Steel has been the core of the local economy. In 1979, 37 per cent of Sheffield's jobs were in metal manufacture, but in the last three years 20,000 steel engineering jobs have left the city. Unemployment this month reached 14 per cent.

The Department is trying to tackle that problem though it probably has not even decided itself how ambitious it can usefully be. At present it is engaging first in a battle of ideas about why the closures are taking place and then helping the stewards' committees fight the closures. Bill Michie says: 'As much as anything we are trying to stimulate debate about the decimation of our industry and to get it home to the people in the street that something can be done as it was with the Belgian steel industry'. At the moment, though, the Department is running to stand still. To be effective in fighting closures, the council needs better early warning systems.

In the case of Firth Brown, the workforce (let alone the council) was told nothing of the merger or the redundancies in advance. But it became clear something was afoot when unusual audits started taking place at the affected plants. Roughly a month ago the Department – which has regular meetings with union officials and stewards anyway – set up a team of five to help the stewards fight the job loss. Ernest Webster, chairman of the Joint Shop Stewards Campaign Committee and Convenor of River Don Stampings, says: 'It will be interesting to see how the City Hall connection develops. They're able to help with publicity and posters much more quickly than the trade union official structure is'.

In the face of the management's refusal to give details, the local authority is trying to establish the right of the unions to be given information. The Department has argued that just as councils have planning inquiries into changes of land use so it seems equitable that there should be public inquiries and justification for changes in labour use. A City Council social audit of the cost of closure is planned. The Council is also considering whether to sue the management for not complying with the EEC's Transfer of Undertakings regulations which stipulate that the workforce must be consulted over the terms of any merger (similar attempts have been made by the white collar union ASTMS).

In the absence of detailed information, the Campaign Committee have employed a University Business Studies accountant and joint author of a book on BSC, Rob Bryer, to look at the published accounts of Firth Brown. The point he makes is that Firth Brown for five years borrowed £32m in short term loans and handed over £25m in dividends in the same period. In the end, as important orders were lost and a 10 year market share agreement with BSC came to an end, the company's cash flow became less than the interest payments on the debt. A less extravagant dividend policy and lower interest payments would have changed the picture. Bryer thinks that the company can still survive, independently. He believes that instead of being nationalised, it should be regionalised. The city council could buy it for £10m.

This solution has not met with universal acclaim in Sheffield. The council does not have the money and there are anyway legal complications about a council trading which have already been well rehearsed by the GLC and the West Midlands County Council Enterprise Boards. Sheffield currently has no enterprise board, but is in talks with the South Yorkshire pension fund and the NUM about using their extensive funds to invest in the local economy.

If such plans come off, the council hopes by then to have a store of products available built up in conjunction with the university and polytechnics. Two of the shop stewards closely involved with the Lucas Aerospace workers' plan for socially useful products now work in the Department. A research study is underway to identify areas of high unemployment for women so that any new job opportunities will not discriminate against women.

This is all long-term. But one of the beauties of Sheffield is that the Labour Party has a far more secure political majority than its counterparts in the GLC and the West Midlands. The council is going to be around for some time; whether the Sheffield steel industry will be is another matter. □

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Licence to kill renewed

Plans to reduce the permitted level of asbestos dust were announced this week. NIGEL POLLITT explores the troubled history of the asbestos industry and explains why there is no 'safe' level: only a total ban will suffice

Courtesy Yorkshire Television

A worker at the Cassiar asbestos factory in Canada

'WE ARE AT the centre of the worst storm in our history, but we shall ride it out.' That was Stephen Gibbs, Chairman of Turner and Newall, Britain's largest manufacturer of asbestos products, speaking to shareholders last May. The storm he referred to was the recession. What he could not foresee was the spectacular sequence of events which followed the screening five weeks ago of a television documentary about the hazards of asbestos, *Alice: A Fight for Life*.

Indeed, there have been more upheavals in these five weeks than in the preceding five years – with walkouts at asbestos factories, questions in the House of Commons and a formal complaint to the Independent Broadcasting Authority from the asbestos industry. More significantly for the future, there has been a dramatic fall in share prices of British asbestos companies, particularly in the case of Turnér & Newall; and after three years' delay, some of the recommendations of the Asbestos Advisory Committee – inadequate though they are – at last seem likely to be implemented. Why does it take a television programme to produce action of this sort, and what exactly are the consequences likely to be?

The asbestos industry has an excellent record for covering its tracks. The Chief Factory Inspector's Annual Report in 1898 spoke of 'easily demonstrated danger to the health of workers'. Since then, evidence has accumulated which ought to have proved 'beyond reasonable doubt' the case for a total ban on asbestos manufacture. There is now, in the United States and in Britain, what has been described as an 'epidemic' of asbestos deaths. Estimates published by the US government in 1978 suggest that as many as half a million people will die as a result of contact with asbestos in this country alone within the next thirty years.

But asbestos is cheap, plentiful, versatile, fire-resistant. From mines in Zimbabwe and Canada it finds its way into road signs and inter-city trains; into soft drinks through asbestos filters; into water pipes, and the dust of city streets. Public scares have been diligently followed with intensive public relations campaigns. Delays while regulations are 'harmonised' with European directives, and token fines for breach of factory regulations, have also helped asbestos to stay big business.

A particularly successful line of defence has been the development of the theory that 'blue' (crocidolite) asbestos was really the culprit, accounting for the least pleasant diseases related to exposure – lung cancer and mesothelioma (cancer of the lung-lining). White (chrysotile) asbestos, accordingly, was less harmful, responsible mainly for the crippling disease asbestosis, where the soft tissue of the lungs gradually becomes hardened and fibrous. Workers whose jobs depended on asbestos were, like the frightened public, glad to embrace the theory; the blue asbestos was effectively banned from Britain over ten years ago. (Now an official ban is proposed – on blue asbestos alone.) More recently, electron microscopes have been used to count asbestos fibres and the results have dented the healthy image of white asbestos. To combat this, efforts have been made to find further evidence to condemn blue asbestos.

But the arguments are wearing thin: if there are blue and white fibres in a dead person's lungs it doesn't prove that one type and not the other is the culprit. The Government's Advisory Committee on Asbestos, set up in 1976 under Bill Simpson, cites research by Professor Enterline in the United States who in 1972 found only one case of mesothelioma in a group he had studied who had been exposed mainly to white asbestos. He now reports 41 cases of mesothelioma from the factory in question, and 17 more among people living in the surrounding area.

This is the same incurable disease that killed Alice Jefferson, featured in Yorkshire TV's documentary. She had worked for Cape Asbestos in Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, for nine months when she was 17. The enduring belief that mesothelioma is *not* caused by white asbestos (which at last appears to be waning) has given the industry a dangerous amount of time to play with. The US government sees no reason to distinguish between white and blue asbestos.

According to Barbara Castle, MEP, whose constituency takes in Turner & Newall's huge asbestos textile factory in Rochdale, 'It's easier to be lofty and purist when one is away from it, sitting in an office. In a town like Rochdale with 16 per cent unemployment you might just say "I'll take the risk brother." '

IT IS GENERALLY assumed that the result of taking the evidence 'seriously' must be to impose tighter regulations. However, there is no 'safe' level of exposure to asbestos. In 1980 the US Government agency responsible for health and safety concluded: 'There is no evidence for a safe level of asbestos exposure. Even at very short periods, one day to three months, significant disease can occur.'

The new lower level of one fibre per cubic centimetre proposed by the Health and Safety Commission will not mean clean air for workers. For example, even if the proposed level were *halved* to 0.5 fibres per cubic centimetre, you would still end up breathing four million fibres in a working day. Multiply that by a lifetime and you aren't looking so well.

Asbestos companies sometimes object to proposals for tighter regulations. (Protesting that such levels of control are 'impossible' to keep helps to gain them spurious credit when they eventually manage to implement them.) Monitoring fibre levels is not always straightforward in any case. Methods of counting fibres vary and there

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is disagreement over which is most accurate.

While established manufacturers may have their own laboratory testing facilities, small firms who engage in asbestos stripping must rely on the services of a freelance agency to do the necessary monitoring. There are a large number of these agencies: some are research departments of universities, some are public analysts, while others are private companies.

There is convincing evidence to suggest that individuals and agencies whose readings may be deemed too high by a stripping firm have not been re-employed. Likewise pressure has in some cases been brought to bear on people to keep their results down to an 'acceptable' level. Whatever method is used and whoever does the monitoring, it is these figures that Factory Inspectors must rely on for their reports. (They can, on occasion, undertake their own monitoring of fibre levels but they are already understaffed, and such actions would be unusual.) Alan Dalton, who works for the Labour Research Department, and whose book *Asbestos Killer Dust* is the asbestos fighter's bible, feels that the safety level could anyway be pulled out of a hat. It is in his opinion very easy for companies to break the law on exposure levels and to get away with it. He told the *New Statesman:* 'If I were the manager of an asbestos factory I wouldn't care if the level was 0.0. What we need is a trial, not an enquiry.'

THE QUESTION OF safety is inevitably linked with that of profitability. The day after *Alice: A Fight For Life* was screened, Cape Industries and Turner and Newall between them lost more than £9 million in share values. Demand for asbestos and other industrial products was already low. Turner and Newall's share price was down to around 60p; since *Alice* was shown it has plummeted to around 30p and there is no prospect of a rapid recovery.

During the 1970s, Turner and Newall looked to diversification, buying up plastics and chemical companies. But results were not encouraging and some of the company's new interests have been sold off or closed – at considerable expense. (According to the 1981 accounts, £20.1 million was the cost of closures alone.) Just when things were looking really bad, 18-year-old sanctions on Rhodesia were lifted and proceeds from Zimbabwean mining interests were 'reconsolidated' into Turner's books, shoring up the company for at least a year. Turner and Newall rely on Third World profits to pay for losses incurred by British and European subsidiaries. However, the Mugabe government's new employment protection legislation has made it difficult to lay off workers in response to the drop in world demand for asbestos – and instead Zimbabwe has become an expensive stockpile of raw fibre. Nigeria has cut back on construction expenditure, which means no revenue from asbestos cement villages. And in India, the government has recently imposed a 74 per cent tax on asbestos-cement products – a move which has the effect of reducing the competitive edge of multinational companies.

The City believes, however, that things should improve. The president of Canada's Johns-Manville asbestos corporation recently described the Third World as a 'rosy glow in the industry's crystal ball', and health and safety issues have never presented such a problem to employers in developing countries as they have in the industrialised West. One analyst told the *New Statesman:* 'We'll always be using it (asbestos) come what may . . . We're not talking about the UK when it comes to safety'.

Even if the market does pick up, another serious threat hangs over the industry, in the form of compensation claims. In the United States, courts often award 'punitive' sums, to meet not only the victim's claim for damages, but also large medical bills and lawyers' fees. Turner and Newall have to their knowledge 1,000 claims currently outstanding against them in the United States. They recently paid out the equivalent of some £750,000 to the widow of an American who had died of mesothelioma at the age of 32; according to Yorkshire Television's documentary, the man had simply *used* one of Turner's products.

Under English law, the amount that can be claimed depends on what a person would have earned, had he or she not died or otherwise been rendered unable to work. Alice Jefferson would have been able to claim a great deal more in compensation had she not been working as a cleaner for a mere £30 a week. But according to Tess Gill, legal officer of the General and Municipal Workers' Union, British claimants may increasingly follow the American lead and go for higher damages. One British employee of a British asbestos company, who is 39 years old and suffering from mesothelioma, is claiming £100,000; this is not 'punitive' since it represents no more than lost earnings, but it does show the sort of sums that companies are having to take into account even on this side of the Atlantic.

Nancy Tait, founder of the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and Industrial Diseases (SPAID), who has devoted her life to the fight against asbestos, feels that what is being done to help victims isn't being recognised, because it tends to make poor newspaper copy. 'Unfortunately', she says, 'the more successful you are, the less is known about it'.

In the light of what we now know about asbestos, it is certain that only a total ban on the manufacture of asbestos products can prevent the suffering that exposure to the deadly fibre creates. It is not a question, as we have seen, of simply tightening up workplace controls. Plenty of people are dying from asbestos-induced cancer who have never been employed in asbestos factories: SPAID has details of teachers, glassblowers, electricians and even of someone who cut up asbestos sheets for just three weeks.

Mention of a total ban brings forth the cry 'what about unemployment?' Yet it is now possible to mass-produce substitutes for every known use of asbestos. We have access to sufficient information about how fibres can become dangerous, and to the necessary expertise to control their size so that substitute fibres cannot be inhaled. Here, surely, is an opportunity for job creation. □

THEY'RE BOTH IN DEAD TROUBLE

The one on the right needs first aid. The one on the left may need aid of a different kind before he returns to Society.

The Matthew Trust is a Mental Health Reform Group, aiming to meet the legal, medical and financial needs of patients with mental illness, and of the victims of violent crime, so often connected with it.

Top priority is the care of former mentally-ill, mental patients, and others in similar plight, who find it hard to adjust to normal life. (This could mean anything from a month's rent to medical psychiatric help.) ***Clearly one case fully rehabilitated is one less on the streets.***

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POLITICS

Odin joins the Tories

Nazis, Odinists and revisionist historians are finding a welcome in the Young Conservatives. MICHAEL COREN reports

SOURCES IN the Conservative Party are predicting a full-scale inquiry into fascist infiltration of the Young Conservatives. This comes only weeks after a party commission concluded that the Federation of Conservative Students had operated a slush fund and that 'certain irregularities' had been committed at their annual conference.

The latest move comes as a surprise, since the Young Conservatives (YCs) are traditionally considered to be a largely non-political body somewhere on the Left of the party; 'more of a marriage bureau than a hard-nosed political group', commented one member. But the leaking of an internal file to the BBC, *Searchlight* and the *New Statesman* has caused something of an uproar in the party. The file is headed by a letter to executive members from Phil Pedley, who is now the national chairman of the YCs but was vice-chairman when he wrote it. He claims that racists are present on the executive, that National Front members are active in the Greater London Young Conservatives and that a branch had invited fascist groups to address them.

Pedley goes on to explain that a Jewish youth organisation, later revealed to be the Union of Jewish Students, has been monitoring these activities and that a copy of the report had been sent to the party chairman. This seemingly highly principled stance is somewhat marred by a remark about 'the damaging electoral impact this information could have in those seats with large Jewish communities. The Prime Minister's own seat is a good example.'

Recent reports of Tory youth groups flirting with Nazism are legion: the Conservative students at their conference took part in a communal singing of the Hitler Youth anthem; in Gloucestershire an entire branch has been accused of joining a neo-fascist group en masse; in Ruislip two members were expelled from the Young Conservatives for National Front membership and in Huntingdon a full-time youth officer made an impassioned speech in favour of repatriation to local YCs.

In Uxbridge Divisional Young Conservatives, a leading member of the branch and frequent contributor to area magazine *Dreadnought* is one Martyn Taylor. Taylor openly admits that up to December 1979 he was a member of the National Front but he is not so forthcoming about the extent of his activities. He was not only a Front activist and perennial letter writer but was friendly with party leaders and something of a party 'philosopher'.

It was in the role of thinker that he contributed to *League Review*, journal of the League of St George. The League is one of Britain's most openly Nazi organisations with links throughout the National Socialist world. Such is its extremism that at one time even National Front members were advised not to join. After leaving the Front and just before joining the Tories, Taylor wrote a long piece on Odinism, an obscure belief in Europe's pre-Christian religion and the glorious pagan roots of the Aryan race – it is an ideology currently in mode among committed Nazis. Heinrich Himmler and many of the SS were followers; most ordinary National Front members have not even heard of it.

Harvey Proctor (centre) on anti-immigrant march in Downing St, 1972

In January 1981 Taylor turned up in Uxbridge Young Conservatives, having convinced all concerned that he was now a supporter of the multi-racial society and the 'Heath plan on immigration.' But before long he began writing for *Dreadnought* and his subject matter was familiar. At the end of an article on Odinism he advertised a pamphlet, available at an address which is believed to be a source for Nazi literature. In further articles Taylor wrote of the Aryan race, but his most bizarre effort was entitled 'On the Right' in which he referred to 'The National Front . . . an over democratic organisation', stated that it was 'generally recognised that the National Front manifesto was the most comprehensive party document available to the public', and described the British Movement as 'very anti-Communist and pro-Europe'. Most ridiculously, he claimed that the European Hitler Youth group 'Viking Youth' 'aims to bring young Europeans together in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation and thereby helping to avoid another European war.'

In early 1981 Uxbridge YC branch played host to Jeffrey Hamm, formerly secretary to Oswald Mosley and one of the longest-serving fascists in Britain, who took the opportunity to justify his views and 'revise' history. During the same period Keith Thompson of the League of St George spoke to the Uxbridge Young Conservatives. Writing of the meeting in *Dreadnought* Taylor said: 'The League had a great many members who did not believe that six million Jews were killed in Nazi Germany' and went on to advertise the infamous *Six Million Lost and Found* and *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*.

When questioned about his attempt to indoctrinate largely non-political Young Conservatives, Taylor seemed taken aback: 'No I'm not a Nazi, you see we were trying to be controversial and so few people were willing to write you know. Look I've already spoken to people about this, the Young Conservatives are quite convinced of me being okay . . .'

Branch chairman Mike Stannard states in a written document: 'we wholeheartedly believe that by our actions we are encouraging freedom of speech.' A former Tory national youth officer, who prefers to remain anonymous, told the *New Statesman* he was not surprised at what was happening: 'It is quite widespread and goes right to the top; there is one person pushing for very high office who would be very sympathetic to these types of view.'

During the arguments over whether Taylor should be expelled from the Conservative Party he has been staunchly defended by Harvey Proctor, Tory Member of Parliament for Basildon. This comes as no surprise to keen observers of the far right.

In 1981 Proctor addressed a meeting of WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scottish, English), an umbrella organisation established in the mid 1970s to coordinate the activities of the Conservative racist right and the then emerging National Front. Among the current organisers is Lady Jane Birdwood of the notoriously anti-Semitic World Anti-Communist League. Present at the meeting along with Proctor was a host of well-known fascists: Joe Pearce with thirty Young National Fronters, Paul Kavanagh of the National Front Constitutional Movement, and Steve Brady and Tony Malski who have been involved in Nazi paramilitary training activity.

Other Tory backbenchers to have spoken to WISE assemblies include Nicholas Winterton, Michael Brotherton, John Stokes and the late Sir Ronald Bell. *Searchlight*, the anti-fascist magazine, has recently given coverage to WISE in an effort to expose the links between right-wing Tories and fascist elements. It reports that a WISE meeting was addressed by John Ellison, foreign editor of the *Daily Express*, and chaired by a leading member of the New National Front, the most extreme of the National Front splinter groups; speakers at that meeting included activists from both the Front and the League of St George.

It's clear that WISE hope to disguise their real policy and activities in an effort to attain credibility and Conservative Central Office has done little to prevent this. As yet they have taken no action on the group, nor commented on Phil Pedley's report on the Young Conservatives of which they received a copy in February. □

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COMMUNISM

Party guests

PHILLIP WHITEHEAD reviews Labour's attitude to 'fraternal visitors'

AS NEWS comes from Poland of further repression and arrests the members of the Labour Party NEC International Committee may be permitted a small sigh of relief. By seven votes to five last month they had reaffirmed invitations to Labour's Annual Conference of all Warsaw Pact countries invited in 1981, except for the Poles and the Czechs.

Then on 28 July the full NEC overturned the decision. All the Warsaw Pact representatives have been sent packing.

It is important that this is not simply notched up as a score in a 'left' versus 'right' struggle on the NEC, but used to reappraise the whole principle of the 'fraternal' invitation. There may then be more than just the temporary gain of avoiding the embarrassment of having Jaruzelski's protectors feted in the Gallery, while he is excoriated on the floor of the Conference.

The practice of inviting East European parties, as well as their embassies, does go back many years. Invitations to the Russians and Czechs were withheld for a period after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, but restored last year, in spite of events in Afghanistan. As a sop to vehement opponents of this move, such as Eric Heffer, it was proposed to invite the dissidents Batchek and Egides as well. The former was imprisoned; the latter was in exile and arrived to make a passionate protest at Brighton. To balance his invitation with one to the representative of the CPSU was, he said, 'one step forward, two steps back'.

Perhaps some voted to invite the official representatives in anticipation of reciprocal fraternal hospitality at Sochi or Karlovy Vary. If so, we can dismiss them with contempt. Others, like Frank Allaun, really believe it will help detente. He even believes that CP representatives from Eastern Europe, watching a democratic party in action, can be swayed by the spectacle. This is a sad muddle. In Eastern Europe party and state have merged, and it is heresy to challenge the party's vanguard role and monopoly of power. Solidarity in Poland has exposed the bankruptcy of these claims wherever we find them, and the Western Eurocommunist parties have aligned themselves in the pluralist camp. If 'fraternal' invitations are to be extended beyond the sister parties of the Socialist International it should surely be to those Communist parties who have proved themselves willing to share power and to permit the free expression of opinion and franchise. No East European CP could do that and survive either its own resultant instability or Moscow's displeasure.

This means that the NEC should resolve that, while of course embassies are invited to send observers, fraternal guests be invited only from parties who share Labour's commitment to pluralism and socialism alike. To do otherwise would be to mock those brave men and women – many of them socialists – who have struggled at great cost for civil and political liberties in their own lands. It would do Labour no harm, internally as well as internationally, to show that it is no whit less concerned about the company it keeps than is, say, the Italian Communist Party. Conversion by osmosis of representatives from the ruling party dictatorships is about as likely as Mr Shelepin having seen the error of his ways when his TUC hosts expressed doubt that he could move effortlessly from being Head of the KGB to being Head of the Soviet Trade Union Federation. Maybe Labour can now exercise its powers of persuasion and its gift for friendship on the reformist Communist parties of Western Europe. □

ECONOMICS

Prodding the jellyfish

In the first of two articles based on his new book* JEREMY BRAY demonstrates the need for a socialist theory of production.

F. A. HAYEK, the Nobel Prize winning economist and philosopher, recently made the remark that socialism lacks a theory of production. John Stuart Mill, whom Hayek regards as the precursor of Fabian socialist economics, offered a socialist theory of distribution, but regarded production as determined by technology. This point of view has changed little with later socialist economic writers. Karl Marx, who poured such scorn on Mill, had a theory about the breakdown of capitalist production, but none about socialist production. Hayek is credited with inspiring the right wing policies of Sir Keith Joseph and Mrs Margaret Thatcher. So his remark might be regarded as biased.

But I have found few among my fellow Labour MPs who disagree with Hayek on this point, or who feel the lack of a socialist theory of production is other than damaging to the prospects of success of socialist governments and social causes generally. It generates the view that socialists and the socially concerned are better at spending money than at producing goods.

Such 'socialism' will work so long as there is a vigorous, fertile production system of which it is possible to enjoy the fruits, while complaining about the injustices of their distribution. Now, however, as the dream of 'production for need' is lost in the dwindling production and the deterioration of quality of both traded and non-traded goods and services, a reaction has been generated.

My reason for describing a theory of production as 'socialist' is to refer to the content of the theory. It is about a wider range of human behaviour than that treated by 'capitalist' theories of production. And by treating a wider range of behaviour it can explain matters which the capitalist theory cannot explain.

To identify that starting point clearly it is helpful to go back to Adam Smith, by whom the whole tradition of economics – Marx and Mill, Keynes and Friedman, and we ourselves – has been much influenced. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith identified self-interest as the driving force and rationalising principle of economic behaviour.

Mary Evans Picture Library

The strength of Adam Smith's thesis is that it offered a unified theory of production and distribution. The pursuit of self-interest in a competitive trading system not only distributes the fruits of production, but also motivates the process of production itself. It not only provided and still provides a fruitful way of analysing economic behaviour, it also offered a popular means of understanding and justifying the economic changes that took place in the development of capitalism at the time, during the Industrial Revolution, and for the two centuries since it was published.

The theory of capitalism has been and remains so successful that a socialist challenge which rejected it would have formidable difficulties. In fact socialist critiques have attempted marginal improvements and corrections, by means including management by the state under state capitalism, and the redistribution of wealth and power within a competitive social market economy.

In his economic analysis, Adam Smith was concerned only with the self-regarding elements in human motivation, and with justice as maintaining a framework for mercenary exchange. Set against the wider background of his writing, it is possible to see how he provided a rationale for the Highland clearances, for hanging a man for stealing a sheep, and for child labour in the mines, as well as for the enterprises in industry and trade which transformed the world in the next two centuries. It is possible to see too how socialist economists

Production, Purpose and Structure (Frances Pinter, £8.95, published 6 September)

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came to fasten on distributive justice as the basis of their criticism.

By 1848, with the industrial revolution in full swing, John Stuart Mill could write:

> The laws and conditions of the production of wealth partake of the character of physical truths. There is nothing optional or arbitrary in them . . . It is not so with the Distribution of Wealth. That is a matter of human institution solely. The things once there, mankind individually or collectively, can do with them as they like.

But he was impressed by French co-operatives and the Rochdale Pioneers:

> From the progressive advance of the co-operative movement, a great increase may be looked for even in the aggregate productiveness of industry. The sources of the increase are two fold. In the first place, the class of mere distributors . . . will be reduced to more modest dimensions . . .

With Mill, however, apparently in mind, Karl Marx wrote in 1875:

> The distribution of the means of consumption at any given time is merely a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves . . . Vulgar socialists (and from them, in turn, a section of the democrats) have followed the bourgeois economists in their consideration and treatment of distribution as something independent of the mode of production and hence in the presentation of socialism as primarily revolving around the question of distribution. Why go back a step when the real state of affairs has been laid bare?

By contrast with his detailed critique and theory of the decay of capitalism in *Capital,* Marx's outlines of any theory or practice of production in a socialist society are rudimentary.

Among later Fabian socialist economic writers, Anthony Crosland in *The Future of Socialism* (1956) excluded the co-operative ideal from socialist aims, which he limited to those concerned with distribution rather than production, namely welfare and equality.

The point of view expressed in the industrial policies on which the 1974-79 British Labour government embarked marked a departure from the Fabian economic tradition. It paid more attention to production, following J. K. Galbraith's *The New Industrial Estate*, which in turn took up ideas of R. L. Marris's *Economic Theory of 'Managerial' Capitalism.*

The classical chain of argument on economic policy stemming from Adam Smith is as follows:

1. On economic matters people are motivated, or act as if they are motivated, solely by self-interest.
2. This motivation produces the greatest satisfaction of demand, in terms of the production and the distribution of goods and services.
3. This requires free exchange in competitive markets.
4. Any intervention in the market will lead to a lesser satisfaction of demand.

Classical policies have therefore been aimed at the removal of barriers to competition and trade, and the avoidance of intervention in markets. The challenge to classical policies has stemmed from a questioning of propositions 2, 3 and 4. The proposition I question here is the first: whether self-interest does or can explain fundamental aspects of economic behaviour in the first place.

Mary Evans Picture Library

Adam Smith preparing for a visit to the Pig and Whistle

The nature of the argument can however be illustrated simply, even starkly, in human terms, which are not so far away from reality. People want money, income, wealth, possessions and all that money can buy – yes. This is one goal. But they also want to give and to receive love, care, concern, recognition, identity, response, respect and co-operation. Money and love interact, certainly. But they are not exchangeable. We can certainly say, 'It pays to co-operate.' And equally any parent who has sought to encourage the independence and individuality of a child can make the matching remark, 'It is loving to compete.' Neither statement is always true, in all circumstances.

The way new 'structures' emerge can be seen in the pub. People go to the pub for a drink and for company. They do not like paying more for their beer than they have to, and the bigger the pub, the less should be the overheads, and the cheaper the beer. But in a big pub it is not such good company because you know fewer of the people, and they ignore you. And they may drink to the point where their companionship suffers. So beyond a point the more the beer and the bigger the company the cheaper the beer but the worse the company. So pubs do not just go on growing. Another pub starts up down the road. The pattern of beer and people flowing to the pubs forms what in non-equilibrium thermodynamics is known as a 'dissipative structure'.

Written in one way the equations give merely the classical supply and demand curves for beer. Written another way, they open up a richer and more complex picture of behaviour than that given by Adam Smith and classical economics.

In practice in looking for a socialist theory of production in a country like Britain (and in deciding how to implement one successfully), three particular areas of economic policy are vital – exchange rates, incomes, and micro-to-macro planning.

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Any national economy is like a rather squidgy jellyfish. You never know quite where it begins and ends. Give it a prod and you cannot be sure which way it will move. And its waving arms and legs get it nowhere in particular, yet it seems to survive. Mr Macmillan used to liken managing the economy to driving a car, and was teased for his 'stop go' policies.

Managing the economy is really more like riding a bicycle. The objectives are full employment, stable prices, growth, and a balance of payments sufficient to keep control of the economy. The policy instruments or controls are public expenditure, taxation and monetary policy. The aim is to operate the controls in such a way as to achieve the objectives as fully as possible. The difficulty is that the economy does not behave in a consistent or predictable way, and does not respond consistently or predictably to the controls. The lesson drawn by the monetarists and practised by Mrs Thatcher's government was that government should use just one control (monetary policy) and watch one objective (inflation), with the other controls locked, and the other objectives looking after themselves. It is like teaching a child to ride a bicycle by saying, 'Never mind about keeping upright, just keep the front wheel straight.' She will go on falling off until she learns that you have to keep reasonably upright, keep the wheel reasonably straight and move at a reasonable speed, all at the same time.

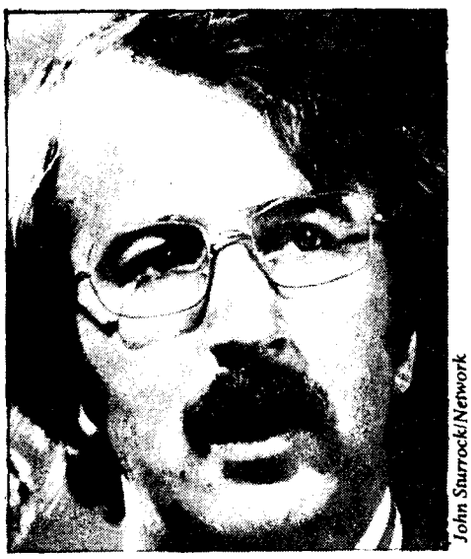
There are no particular levels to which policy makers wish to raise or lower most particular variables, like real incomes and unemployment. They wish to see growth and real incomes as high as possible, and unemployment and inflation as low as possible, other things being equal. At whatever is the most acceptable achievable balance in the shorter and longer term, they would still wish to see lower unemployment, for example, if it did not mean higher inflation. What makes the balance acceptable is that the benefit of further lowering unemployment at that level and at that time is counter-balanced by the cost of any increased risk of inflation, in the model being used.

The actual balance is determined by the combination of the priorities of the policy makers, and the objective behaviour of the economy. We can think of 'priority' as the price the policy makers are prepared to pay for a marginal change in that particular variable: how much reduction in unemployment would be required to tolerate a 1 per cent increase in inflation, for example. It is reasonable to require that the 'priority' of improving a particular variable increases the worse that variable becomes. Thus as unemployment grows worse the priority of reducing unemployment increases. The sum of the benefits as weighted by the priorities is called, in control theory terms, the *objective function*. The maximisation of the objective function expresses the fullest possible achievement of the objectives, weighted by their relative priorities, or in short the optimisation of policy. It should be noted that optimisation is with respect to the particular model and set of priorities chosen, and not optimisation in any absolute sense. □

FOREIGN REPORT: POLAND

Blows and cries in the Polish jailhouse

DENIS MacSHANE (below), arrested in Warsaw last week, suggests that General Jaruzelski's efforts to break all opposition are failing



John Sturrock/Network

'WHAT ON EARTH is going on?' said the braying voice of the British export drive as we both stood just outside Poland's plushest hotel watching the Warsaw riot police move heavily into a group of Polish demonstrators in the middle of what is Warsaw's equivalent of Trafalgar Square.

'Oh, just riot police kicking workers around', I replied.

'Shocking, disgraceful', he muttered.

'Last time I saw something like that was at Grunwick', I replied conversationally. I think it took a full 30 seconds before the zloty dropped and then he moved away as if he had heard something even more objectionable than the crump of tear gas bombs exploding into the dispersing crowd.

Sensibly he went back inside the hotel while I stayed to watch the militia chase away people and destroy the pathetic cross of flowers erected mainly by elderly women in memory of the late Cardinal Wyszinski, where demonstrations had regularly taken place until the authorities erected a large steel barricade around the square last week.

I hardly noticed the ZOMO captain who came up, pointing angrily at the little tourist camera in my hand and shouting for my passport. I told him it was in my hotel room but instead he grabbed me and for the next 48 hours I found myself an involuntary guest of General Jaruzelski's preferred partners in governing Poland – the militia and armed riot police, the ZOMO.

Many Poles say that the ZOMO are dosed with drugs or alcohol before they are let loose on demonstrations. I did not make any personal enquiries but the breath of most of the militia men around me smelt quite normal. They reminded me very much of London Special Patrol Group policemen – young, heavy-faced with long sideburns and those slightly overweight bodies that come from too much beer, meat and potatoes and not enough fibre and exercise. They have that kind of self-protective camaraderie common to elite police forces anywhere in the world; as long as they are well-paid, well-fed and told by the Polish equivalent of the *Sun* and the *Daily Telegraph* that they are doing a fine job, it is unlikely that they will desert their masters.

The same is true of the Polish army. Observers of the extraordinary developments in Poland during Solidarity's 16 months of existence were bewitched by the visible crumbling of the Polish United Workers' Party, the country's ruling communist party since 1948. But they failed to observe that state power, in terms of the coercive power of the military and police forces, remained intact. As Solidarity now tries to regroup and develop new forms of resistance, it faces a new problem. In the first year of its existence, Polish workers and intellectuals were engaged in a political dialogue with their rulers, but now General Jaruzelski knows only how to give orders and, if there are stirrings in the ranks, to suppress them quickly, if necessary by the application of quite brutal force.

There are many well-documented cases of severe beatings by the militia. All I saw inside the Warsaw militia headquarters was a couple of vicious blows to one youngster who had said something nasty to the militia man ushering him into the cell. Another prisoner whose face was dreadfully swollen on one side and whose shirt was spattered with blood said that he had been truncheoned by the ZOMO while they were chasing him. Occasionally as the night went by one heard blows and cries from other parts of the building. One fellow inmate who kept shouting and kicking the cell door was dragged away by the militia and we could hear him being thumped before he was flung into a solitary cell. But there were 40 people with me in a 12 foot-square cell on my first night and 10 in a standard one-person cell in a different prison on my second night: most seemed undamaged.

The militia did not even respond when a great cry went up that 'Bujak would come and release us and fix you lot!' Zbigniew Bujak was the head of Solidarity in Warsaw and is still at liberty. His measured and politically acute statements over the past eight months, as well as the popular

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demonstrations and wide range of publications that are initiated by the underground Solidarity movement, indicate that there is no social or political base to the authorities' hold on power. My co-prisoners were young workers, students and teenagers. Many had been picked up quite casually in sweeps long after specific demonstrations. If the intention was to intimidate them, then to judge by their comments the arrests were a failure.

Every one of them supported unequivocally the underground Solidarity organisation and kept apologising to me, a foreigner, for what had happened. But there was no optimism about. Several talked of emigrating though obstacles were placed in their way more by Western governments than by the Polish authorities.

Poles with relatives in England who want to make family visits now have to call personally on the Warsaw embassy. Even grandmothers and small children have to travel from distant parts of Poland and wait in line for several hours and then go through a humiliating interview procedure designed to prove that they will return to Poland. Visas for those who obviously want to emigrate permanently from Poland are virtually impossible to obtain. Britain's policy was formed, along with that of other Western governments, in the immediate aftermath of the repression of Solidarity and Jaruzelski's cynical offer of one-way passports to Solidarity activists ready to quit Poland. The offer was indignantly rejected inside Poland and made unworkable by the then quite correct response of the West to refuse to co-operate.

Now things have changed. Few people in Poland see an immediate development that would restore Solidarity; most have resigned themselves to a long struggle. One intellectual talked of another ten-year cycle. For some, the prospect of joblessness, possible imprisonment and the blighting of the lives of their children or close relatives is just too much and they wish to leave. It hardly seems consistent with the many anti-communist pronouncements of Mrs Thatcher that Britain should now leave these Poles to endure Jaruzelski's regime.

Even if some tens of thousands do leave it will not solve Jaruzelski's problems. His simplistic command economy shows no signs of working and Poland is producing less and consuming less and is likely to maintain this downward economic spiral for at least a decade ahead. This is producing the kind of pressures at the base of social and productive relations that led to the workers' uprisings of 1970, 1976 and 1980. Once the current critical period commemorating the signing of the 1980 Gdansk agreement is over, pressure will build up for protests to coincide with the first anniversary of the 'state of war' declaration on 13 December. Then there will be agitation for a papal visit in 1983. It is easy enough, the saying goes, to swallow Poland, but digesting her people is quite a different matter. □

Denis MacShane was on a private visit to Poland when he was arrested. A low level people's court in Warsaw found him not guilty of the charges connected with being in the presence of a gathering that was illegal under Poland's martial law regulations.

LIBERATION

Why South Africa had to kill Ruth First

Was Ruth First murdered because of her position in the African National Congress? JOSEPH HANLON, in Maputo, argues that South Africa felt equally threatened by her other work

Ruth First arriving in London, 1964 AP

The murder of Ruth First in Maputo last week is a harsh reminder that the apartheid regime considers intellectuals as legitimate targets. Most British academics would find it hard to believe they could ever do anything important enough to be killed for. Thus many must accept the explanation of the BBC Johannesburg correspondent that Ruth was killed because she had been helping to direct African National Congress (ANC) actions inside South Africa.

But the South Africans had often made it clear that they felt equally threatened by what Ms First was really doing. The Botha government says it must respond to a 'total onslaught' of military, economic, political, and ideological action. As one of the region's most prominent intellectuals, Ruth played a key role in organising and encouraging a co-ordinated response by the majority-ruled states of the region.

Ruth was Research Director of the Centre for African Studies of Eduardo Mondlane University. She was killed in her office by a letter bomb just three days after the end of a UNESCO sponsored conference at the Centre had brought together progressive researchers from the region. The bomb serves as a clear warning to those who attended that if their work is effective, they too will be targets.

In her four years in Mozambique, Ruth First did what most academics on the left only dream of: she created a centre of activist research helping to transform a society. 'In the context of Mozambique,' she wrote recently, 'social research must play an immediate and active role in the process of socialist transformation. There is often too little time for extended study, for decisions must be taken immediately. When one writes up research results, one attends not to the latest state of theoretical debate on the issue, but rather to the language and expectations of the people working to implement the Frelimo line in concrete situations.'

Research is only done on topics which the Centre feels need studying, and where a government ministry or agency actually wants to know the answer and is prepared to commission the study. Nothing is done for 'academic interest'. International academic journals are never a target of the Centre's research. But it still draws on recent developments in Marxist theory. Indeed, it argues that the development of theory is not a separate activity, but one that can come only from practical research.

The stress on immediacy and audience grew out of Ms First's nearly 20 years as a journalist and editor in South Africa. The Centre often felt more like a newspaper than an academic department. One researcher called it 'a group of very good Marxist academics driven on by an excellent investigative journalist'. Like a good editor, she broke research results into a variety of reports tailored to the needs of those who used the information. She kept glue and a large pair of scissors to cut and paste drafts she thought too long. Researchers at the Centre say they produced reports to deadlines they never thought possible, but that Ruth never allowed second-rate work despite the urgency.

This kind of research is only possible because a socialist transition is under way, and involves questions that a committed social science can confront. In this, the Centre's work has not been easy. From the start, it had to fight the fascist Portuguese tradition of social science as rote and dogma, not analysis. Moreover socialist transition implies class struggle, which is reflected in choices of development strategy and tactics. Ms First became part of that struggle, and often voiced strong criticisms. Her comments, for example, on agricultural mechanisation were not always well received. But they were always listened to. As she had been for so long in the ANC and South African Communist Party,

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she was a militant insider, speaking a language people understood.

Because the Centre puts its research into the broader context of a move toward socialism, its reports are never consultants' cookbooks intended to solve problems simply. But Frelimo has set especially hard challenges. For example, the tea industry is known for its exploitation of workers. Frelimo believes it can produce tea and earn foreign exchange but end the exploitation. The Centre's researchers spent a month living in villages on tea plantations, carefully studying the relationship of the peasants to the tea estates and to their own farms. The colonial estates depended on a huge pool of seasonal pickers, who could be paid starvation wages because their families produced food. The first step in changing this must be a move toward a permanent workforce. Instead of being isolated from each other through the constant turnover, the permanent workers could gain skills and lay the foundation for worker control. And any move to a permanent workforce, the Centre found, must be linked to the formation of agricultural co-operatives.

The tea study, and all others, are not done just by a few researchers. They involve all the students in a year-long development course, which is the other focus of the Centre's work. Although they are doing a post-graduate level course, the students usually have no more than secondary schooling. They are nominated by Frelimo, ministries, and the army, and include high officials and even Central Committee members. They continue half time in their normal jobs and half time in the Centre.

The course is not to train researchers, but to train to think concretely the people actually creating the transition to socialism. The annual research project comes at the middle of the course, and the whole second half of the year is spent building on that to understand more deeply the problems facing Mozambique.

Frelimo has always seen Mozambique's development as being inextricably linked to the liberation of the entire region. It has supported the ANC and the Zimbabwe liberation movements at considerable immediate cost to itself. The Centre has been part of that regional perspective. Its first study was of migrant miners returned from South Africa. This led to a conference in Lusaka of labour exporting countries, which tried to draw up a migrant workers' charter. Ruth First was a key figure at that conference, which drew to her the renewed calumny of the South African press. The Centre also applied its Marxist analysis to South Africa and the region as a whole, and its studies helped to inform Frelimo policy.

Ruth First came to Mozambique by choice, and made it the focus of her work. She saw that it is still an open question whether Mozambique can make the transition to socialism. She worked for that transformation, because she saw the victory of socialism in Mozambique as crucial for the development of socialism in South Africa. Clearly the apartheid regime agrees, which is why it has stepped up attacks on Mozambique, and why it killed Ruth First. □

MIDDLE EAST

Firing on refugees

ALAN GEORGE reveals an atrocity by Lebanese 'Christians'

HARDLY HAD ISRAEL invaded Lebanon than it began implementing plans to extend the operational area of its allies, the extreme right wing 'Christian' Phalangists. When Israeli troops reached Beirut, Phalangist forces, who hold the east sector of the city, were encouraged to enter the areas under Israeli occupation to the south. There, they set up command posts and road blocks, amid widespread fears of a recurrence of the atrocities they committed during the Lebanese civil war. The fears have since become reality.

The Miya Miya refugee comp, located on the edge of the coastal town of Sidon, until recently housed some 4,000 Palestinians, mostly Christians. The camp put up no resistance to the Israeli invasion forces in June, and was undamaged. On the evening of 7 August, towards the start of the night-long curfew, however, smoke was seen billowing from Miya Miya. Phalangist gunmen based on the edge of the camp had set fire to 140 Palestinian homes. Shortly after, the Phalangists fired for about five minutes at a group of Palestinian women and children in the camp. They were at some distance, and apparently no one was wounded, but the following day up to half the Miya Miya residents were seen streaming from the camp.

Some are now squatting in the rubble of another Palestinian refugee camp in Sidon – Ein al Helweh, which was all but destroyed by the Israelis. Others have sought refuge in abandoned shops and half-finished apartment blocks in the town, which were already crowded with the homeless from the invasion.

The timing of the attack on Miya Miya suggests premeditation. It being a weekend, the local staff of the International Red Cross and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) were not in their offices, and the imminent curfew meant that there would be few eye-witnesses. Israeli troops, who are responsible for maintaining the curfew, made no effort to prevent the Phalangists' assault.

The Red Cross and UNRWA know about the attack, but are staying quiet. They already face severe harassment from the Israelis, who want as few independent observers as possible in the region, and have therefore done all they can to limit international relief operations. The aid agencies fear that if they speak out, they will be ejected. □

SOUTH AFRICA

Don't stay for the night

JOHN KANE-BERMAN gives the details of the apartheid regime's draconian new law

THE SOUTH AFRICAN government is planning a nation-wide urban curfew against all 'unauthorised' black people as part of the most drastic tightening of the pass laws since they were extended in the 1950s to include women. The proposals, contained in a new draft law called the 'Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill', are now being considered by a select committee, which has invited comment by 31 August.

Its essential features are these. Blacks will be prohibited from staying overnight in the towns without permission, and even those who have official authorisation will lose it if they do not have 'approved accommodation'. People sheltering 'unauthorised' blacks can be fined R20 for each night they do so. And people employing them can be fined R5,000 or jailed for a year, or both.

The curfew will operate from 10 o'clock at night until five the following morning. It will apply not only in the white suburbs of the cities but also on the streets and homes of the black townships themselves. Under present law, blacks can remain up to 72 hours in the urban areas without permission, but the new proposals mean they will not be able to stay even for one night.

As overpopulation and economic stagnation have overtaken the 'homelands' there has been an influx of blacks to the towns in search of work. As long as the fines were nominal, white employers were willing to hire, and black householders willing to accommodate, such 'illegal' people. The government is now utterly determined to stamp this out. With its computerised pass records – including fingerprinting (all 10 fingers of each person) of all blacks – it will have little difficulty checking whether people rounded up in pass raids are 'authorised' for urban residence.

The bill has been hailed in some quarters as a liberal breakthrough because it recognises a category of blacks as 'permanent urban residents'. However, while under present law blacks with rights to stay in town are generally able to keep them, under the new bill even those with official 'authorisation' to stay in town can lose it if a 'designated officer' of the government does not approve of their accommodation. There is a drastic shortage of black housing all over South Africa. In Soweto, for example, there are thought to be at least 35,000 families waiting for housing.

The bill also controls the presence of blacks in rural areas. It says in clause 15: 'No black person shall be resident in the rural area unless he has been authorised thereto by the designated officer.' Provision is then made for 'farm tenement boards' to determine the labour needs of the local farmers. □

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All the news that fits

ALEXANDER COCKBURN looks at American coverage of Israel's behaviour in Lebanon

THE US PRESS has hailed the PLO's departure from Lebanon as a triumph of American diplomacy and is now touting Mr Philip Habib as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. The response is predictable enough; it does, however, follow the greatest challenge ever posed to the tradition of self-censorship over Israeli affairs.

On Thursday, 5 August, for example, the main front page story in the *New York Times*, filed by its Beirut bureau chief, Thomas L. Friedman, began: 'Israeli planes, gun boats and artillery rained shellfire all across West Beirut today as Israeli armoured units pushed towards Palestinian refugee camps and neighbourhoods on the southern outskirts of the capital . . .' The following day, Friedman sent a long and angry telex to his editors. **'I found', Friedman wrote, 'your decision to excise the world "indiscriminate" from my lede (sic) of last night a most disturbing and appalling news judgment . . .'**

> It was clear from what I reported that what took place yesterday was "indiscriminate" bombing and shelling. My God, your own reporter's hotel was hit 30 feet from his room and there are no Palestinian positions in the Commodore, let alone near all of the other prominent institutions I noted. You should also know that unlike most of the other correspondents sitting in the basement of the Commodore I and Bill Brannigan of the *Washington Post* went out in the afternoon all the way to the museum crossing point and port to establish for ourselves exactly how far the Israelis had advanced. I needn't tell you this was done at no small danger.
>
> It was after this tour and everything I had heard and seen during the day that I came to the conclusion that what happened yesterday was something fundamentally different from what happened on the previous 63 days. For the first time the Israelis had indiscriminately bombed the city, with the apparent aim of terrorizing its civilian population. This was the very essence of what was news yesterday, the very essence of what the newspaper of record should have told its readers and future historians about what took place here on 4 August . . .
>
> What can I say? I am filled with profound sadness by what I have learned in the past afternoon about my newspaper. This is no overdramatization . . . you knew what you were doing involved more than just a single word . . . throughout the entire length of this story I comported myself, and represented the *New York Times*, with dignity. Right now I feel thoroughly humiliated.

The cowardice of almost all American reporting on Israel has long been a source of wonderment to outside observers. It has also been a source of distress, particularly to Israeli doves who complain vehemently that one of the reasons for the blind zeal with which most American Jews support all actions of any Israeli government is that over the past 34 years they have been unable to find – in major American newspapers or on the TV networks – any indication that Israel might have behaved in a manner other than beneficial, not only to its citizenry but to humanity at large.

It is true that around the time of Camp David, the *New York Times* discovered the existence of Palestinians and devoted a five-part series to them. The occasional correspondent – notably William Claiborne of the *Washington Post* – had the courage to report that all was not well in Begin's Zion, most particularly on the West Bank. But to anyone with access to the Hebrew press, or to translations of *Ha'aretz* and *Davar*, it was plain that the US press was – by and large – obediently catering to Zionist fantasies: about the humanity of Israel's soldiers, the equity of its rule in the occupied territories, the virtue and prudence of its politicians.

When the invasion of Lebanon began on 6 June, at first both press and television bought the line that the invasion was a response to 'massive PLO bombardments'. Confronted with evidence that the PLO had obeyed the cease-fire for nearly a year, they shifted to a back-up position that Israel's 25-mile lunge would soon be over – a necessary lunge in the cause of restoring Lebanon to the Lebanese.

The terminology of reporters and editorialists at this point followed the Nazi-speak of the Israeli military: in the interests of establishing 'a new order' (sic) in Lebanon, 'terrorists' were being 'flushed out', and Southern Lebanon 'cleansed'.

The skills of the Israeli spokesmen and the edicts of the military censors could not entirely conceal the fact that large portions of Tyre and Sidon had been 'cleansed' into rubble. The rule seemed to be that for every three articles describing the welcome accorded the Israeli invaders by Lebanese, the extraordinary care taken by Israeli bombardiers to incinerate only PLO fighters and not women and children, and so on, a fourth could describe with greater frankness what was actually going on. The fate of Palestinian prisoners was – and remains – a subject largely ignored. The use of cluster and phosphorus bombs, first reported by Richard Ben Cramer in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, only inched its way into other papers, decorated by Israeli excuses about 'military targets'.

**BUT IF the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and indeed many other newspapers remain editorally 'understanding' of Israel's 'tragic dilemma', enough important columnists have been creating enough of a stink about the invasion, the refugees, the bombings, Sharon, etc, for Israel's seasoned salesmen in the US to become nervous. Trusties such as Martin Peretz, editor and publisher of the *New Republic*, and Tom Hayden, the Sixties radical now carving out a conventional political career for himself in California, rushed, or were rushed, to Israel and Southern Lebanon, for briefings about casualties (very few), Israel's determination to quit Lebanon (almost within the hour) and the immensity of PLO armaments. Both Peretz and Hayden returned publicly proclaiming the justice of the invasion and the restrained behaviour of the Israeli forces.

The siege of West Beirut, the sight of Israelis switching the district's water supplies on and off, the spectacle of bombed hospitals and maimed children were all the while being conveyed to millions of Americans on the nightly television news. Was this, asked NBC anchorman John Chancellor, as he stood amid West Beirut's ruins, the work of the Israel he had known and loved? Americans have heared commentators and politicians speak of a United States and a US President 'humiliated' by Israel. The image of Israel – hence the latitude permitted reporters well aware that a reputation for anti-Israeli bias is easily earned and does not look good on a career resume – has changed.

The degree of the change should not be overestimated, though. Most Americans, after 30 years of unremitting propaganda, think of Palestinians as Begin does – 'vermin'; it follows that public support for Israel, and hence US funding, will not be seriously reduced. No more than a handful of US politicians (actually about six in the present Congress) think they can long survive if they are critical of Israel. And this year's popular cause, the Freeze Movement, refuses to acknowledge that the world does indeed have a madman with a nuclear bomb in its midst and his name is not Qaddafi but Begin. □

National Literacy Week
6-12 September 1982

Literacy ...don't take it as read

Two million adults in Great Britain have serious difficulty with reading and writing. Many missed school due to illness or came from a generally disadvantaged background. Think for just a minute of all of the times that you read or write in a day and then try to understand how you would feel if you were unable to read and write.

For further information contact:

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 01-405 4017

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DIARY

Bernard Crick

ON the road, it was 101 degrees in Oklahoma as I wrote, and now 65 at 7 p.m. and 8,000 feet near Albuquerque, New Mexico, as I type and revise. My idea was to finish what I'd started as a young man in 1953 and 1954, a slow drive through the South, just out of what killed the cat, curiosity, to see how things have changed – as they were beginning to change then. The Supreme Court had ruled for 'slow but deliberate speed' and slowly people were getting used to the idea. One hot night I was dining out with a young man from Kentucky, back and bemedalled from the Korean War, and his Nashville belle. 'Things must change', he said, 'whether we like it or not'. 'Up in Maryland already . . . ', I replied. 'The code!', he interrupted. 'Up in Maryland', I repeated. 'The code!', he hissed. Were his wounds unhinging him? I tried again. He kicked me and fairly roared 'the code!' while his belle, who didn't talk, looked flustered. As his guest I was wrong, I think, when I rallied, to have ignored 'the code' – the waiter had been approaching the table and one didn't talk about it in front of them. But I had never expected, outside Walter Scott, Mark Twain or Sociology, 'the code' to be externalised, reified and *named*. Perhaps the Kentuckian, like me, was a parvenu, not really a gentleman.

When in Rome, do as Romans do, or at least I put up with a lot of nonsense and horror if I want to find out how other people think. Didn't my own brother in Rhodesia believe, after he was saved, that the text 'My Father's house has many mansions' proves that blacks can be saved, but that heaven is segregated (and pamphlets printed in British Columbia proved the point)? If one allows oneself to be drawn or baited, or challenges opinions, one ceases to learn: the journalist and the scholar have that in common (the 'campaigning journalist', the 'committed scholar'? I prefer to think that one person does two things rather than muddling both). However, though I told the editor that I'd be making a slow, stopping-to-talk journey through the South, I'm afraid the crew have revolted and we are on the road. I could have reminded 'Waiting For "A" Level Results' and 'Unemployed Graduate/Actor' of my promise, or of the harsh capitalist reality that I'm paying for the trip, but modern parenthood doesn't work that way. Besides, while I'd go tiger shooting with my boys, I'm not sure about anthropologising with them. They are of a generation who won't hide their opinions of certain Roman habits even for business or play. They would blow my cover or tell the indigenous majority Mississippians what they think of them. I must do my trip alone one day.

○

Truth to tell, I've given way easily enough to their excitement to be on the road and to get the feel of the size of the continent. But perhaps I misjudged their powers of empathy. We did stop overnight in North Carolina with a Quaker Professor of Biblical Studies and his wife. The boys acquitted themselves well through grace, a dry meal, Anglophile talk about your dear Queen and how much we love her, and even went out after supper (while others came in for a committee meeting on their 1984 conference, of course) and came back not smelling of beer. But over breakfast, just as we were going, our hosts pointed to an oil on their wall, a black Christ manacled, and said a pity that the artist couldn't have come last night, their head of Art. They had known him well since they had bailed him out the night when Martin Luther King marched through Greensboro, and, talking with him, they'd then joined the march. There would have been degenerate violence, they said, if the FBI hadn't been watching the State militia. 'And if a different President hadn't been watching the FBI?' I ventured. So on the very doorstep, lined up for farewells, they mentioned that they'd been young teachers in Palestine, near Tel Aviv, in 1946 and 1947. They said it was a pity that the press in North Carolina could only see one side of the question. To my astonishment, Tom didn't know what Quakers were, although he must have often heard me say that certain friends in Northern Ireland can be 'too Quakerish'. So I tried to give an account of the Friends that implied that most of us are not Quaker enough. I think Ernest Gellner once wrote of the need for 'cultural tolerance' but 'intellectual intolerance'.

When I crossed the Mississippi in 1954 and drove West on the old Interstate 40 through Arkansas, Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle and New Mexico, the road wasn't even dual carriageway and went through every small town and hamlet. 'Sparta Loves Its Children. Speed Limit 20 mph. Radar Checked'. The radar was always a man with a belly, a badge and a gun who offered the choice between a ten dollar ticket or an appearance in court in two days' time. It was an interesting, redistributive system of rural local government finance. All gone. Limited-access freeways now span the continent, but we did discover that, just as in France, the old roads are still there, can actually be quicker, avoiding the traffic, especially the terror of the huge trucks crashing up through one's rear mirror, scorning any enforcement of the energy-conserving 55 mph speed limit, warning each other of patrol cars by citizen-band radio (almost as much a constitutional right as a hand-gun).

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Each time I return, 'I've fallen in love with American names'. Indeed, on or just off Oklahoma 9: Keota, Stigler, Enterprise, Eufaula, Radford, Dustin, Lincoln, Wetumka, Seminole, Bethel Acres, Pink, and we by-pass Prague, London, Cromwell and Henryetta. And by avoiding the freeway one passes through the cluttered, sprawling bizarrities of small town America. The girl in the Pizza Shack signs the bill in pencil, 'Been real nice to serve you. Come again Beth'. Personalization cannot go further. After buying ten dollarsworth of groceries in a tumbledown Arkansas store: 'I want to tell yer, yer come right back, yer hear me now?' And in Oklahoma: 'I likes yer accent. Yer's not from Tennessee?' 'Cold Beer and Bait.' 'Come In And Be Saved.' 'Home of the Whopper.' 'Chilly Willies.' 'World's Fastest Washeteria.' 'Lions Thursday, Elks Friday.' The faces of evangelists and candidates for sheriff jostle each other on the telegraph poles. And I say every two hunded miles, 'Hot day. Fill her up with regular unleaded.' I love repeating that old litany of continental travel, though the word 'unleaded' is new. The Republic moves in small ways, sometimes sideways and backwards. Who believes in progress nowadays? Oddly I miss the sweat and dust: even a Hertz-hired Escort has airconditioning.

ROGER WODDIS

Force of levity

Russian woman cosmonaut Svetlana Savitskaya was presented with an apron by her male colleagues aboard the Salyut 7 space station, and asked to take over housekeeping duties.

Twinkle, twinkle, Soviet star,
What a lucky girl you are,
Doing household chores in space
High above the human race!

Clearly, from the way they spoke,
You were meant to take a joke;
Laughter at a merry quip
Seals the bonds of comradeship.

Fearless women such as you
Also need to laugh on cue,
Proving they can stomach still
Humour fit for *Krokodil*.

Life in orbit, as we know,
Differs from the one below;
Jesters here do not compare
With the clowns you have up there.

Earthbound women, damp of soul,
Relish their domestic role,
Happiest and most serene
When they're told to cook and clean.

THIS ENGLAND

£3 book tokens for entries printed (on postcards, please).

☐ *Bedmaker service.* With effect from 1 October residents in college will receive a visit from a bedmaker only once every two days instead of daily as in the past. In addition, the bedmaker's duties will be confined to cleaning rooms; she will not make beds . . . – From noticeboard at Jesus College, Cambridge (Marjorie Gamage)

☐ Palace sources point out that before Prince Andrew left for the Falklands, the Queen insisted that he be treated like any other serving officer, and should have no special privileges. To create him Duke of York immediately on his return might therefore be regarded as special treatment. – *The Times* (Peter Reina)

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LETTERS

Gay rights and the labour movement

John Shiers and Chris Beer, Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, 61a Bloom Street, Manchester 1

The *New Statesman's* editorial on Commander Trestrail (30 July) was a courageous piece which challenged the failure of the Labour Party to respond politically to the 'scandal'. Yet the *NS* was almost a lone voice on the 'conventional' left in this analysis.

It was entirely consonant with its current populist tendencies that the Labour front bench grabbed at the 'security' angle and ignored the fundamental point of the whole affair – the fact that lesbians and gay men remain hounded, persecuted and abused in Britain today. The deep fear of the issues raised by sexual politics is further evidenced by the Party NEC's cowardly decision to abandon practical measures for equality for gay people in its draft for *Labour's Programme*. The silence of labour journals – including the *NS* but most notoriously *Labour Weekly* – has contributed to the absence of any informed debate.

It has also encouraged most lesbians and gay men in the Party and in unions to keep their heads down. Consequently, although there are leading Labour politicians and trade unionists who are homosexual, not one of them (except Maureen Colquhoun) is openly and proudly gay. This is presumably why you felt it necessary to turn for your major article to the Editor of *Gay News*, a newspaper whose ideology is firmly rooted in liberal individualism and which has never understood the labour movement.

While we strongly disagree with Andrew Lumsden's stated views, we must admit that the cynicism he displays is shared by most male gay organisations. But their adoption of wholly uncritical, male-oriented middle-class values is a direct consequence of the failure of the male-dominated leadership of the labour movement to take sexual politics seriously. Those who lose out most are the hundreds of thousands of black and white working-class gay men and women whose existence is ignored by both the labour movement and those same gay organisations.

The responsibility for raising the issues of gay rights does not rest with gay people alone. What we in the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights need is for *all* who support our aims, whatever their sexuality, to join us to fight the dominance of patriarchal values in the labour movement.

Home births

Hanna Corbishley, National Secretary, The National Childbirth Trust, 9 Queensborough Terrace, London W2

Peter Kellner makes some very telling points in his excellent article (*NS* 13 August) in support of availability of home delivery for those who choose to give birth away from high technology hospitals.

The implications of 100 per cent hospital births are that there is now no research or thought given to making home birth safer, and the flying squads are being run down. Yet, as Peter Kellner points out, home births happen as emergencies, and latest OPCS figures show an extremely high perinatal mortality rate for at least one highly vulnerable group, pregnant teenagers, who get no antenatal care and have an unplanned birth at home. Is it not sad that there is now a whole generation of young doctors and even midwives who have never seen a perfectly normal machineless, dripless, drugless birth, who would be hard put to cope with one in an emergency.

Hospital delivery for all may be appropriate for densely populated urban areas, but the woman in Orkney in labour has to travel 70 miles to give birth. Is that supposed to be good for her and her baby? And what have we to teach developing countries with their widely scattered rural communities?

Our postbag demonstrates that an increasing number of women would opt for a home birth were it available. They tell us how depersonalised they felt in hospital; how they hardly saw the same face twice; and how much attention and cossetting the machines got while they were just left lying there. They explain they want to be active birth givers, and not viewed as pathological containers for a baby who will not be deemed 'safe' till he or she is removed from the uterus. Those who have had a home birth speak of the intense pleasure of birth within a familiar setting with a midwife they have got to know and trust during their pregnancy, who gave help and support where needed, was always there, but allowed nature to take its course.

Perhaps if more obstetricians listened to what mothers were telling them, not so many women would want to opt out of hospital.

The dangers of asbestos

Nancy Tait, Secretary, SPAID, 38 Drapers Road, Enfield, Middx

John Devonshire (letters 6 August) suggests a broadly based campaign against the continued use of asbestos and to help victims.

SPAID (the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and Industrial Diseases), registered as a charity in 1978, has wide experience of the asbestos problem. We advise people disabled by asbestos and pass to decision makers the information on this provided by their case histories.

We have pioneered the use of the electron microscope on behalf of victims and this work has shown that, contrary to recent statements by the Medical Research Council, chrysotile (white asbestos) enters the lungs and is therefore too dangerous to be used.

We need help to expand this work. Will any reader willing to help us spread our information, organise meetings and raise funds, please send a large stamped addressed envelope for details. We would also be very grateful for any donations.

Transport politics

James Evans, 4 Coleherne Court, London SW5

Mick Hamer's points on the pro-road bias and the selection procedures of the proposed Metropolitan Transport Authority (*NS* 13 August) are well taken. What should be added, though, is that for a coherent transport strategy to have any meaning at all, *every* authority – local, regional and national – must be committed to the long-term goals, whatever the political vagaries of the short- and medium-term. So unless the MTA's relationship to the shifts in political power and thinking in local and central government is clearly worked out, the new authority will remain as emasculated as LT.

It is also worth saying that the road lobby is the thin end of the wedge that works against a sensible transport strategy. Transport planners are trained for the most lucrative part of the market: traffic planning. While university syllabuses are geared to this end the 'transport' planners in government departments will be parking lots for the ideas of the road lobby and the short-sighted politicians who act on behalf of vested interests.

Googlies & flippers

F. Chatterjee, Bow, London E3

Spin bowling is a subject on which the socialist movement in this country has been silent for far too long, so I was glad to see Paul Foot (Diary, 20 August) opening up a debate on the matter. However, Foot blames the shortage of leg-spin bowlers on the lbw rule. I wonder if it's as simple as that. The very fact that Abdul Qadir, in Foot's words, 'causes all sorts of havoc in the English batting' suggests that it is still possible for spin bowlers to perform well despite the lbw restrictions.

The real trouble, surely, is that fast bowlers have been glamourised so that every schoolchild now wants to be the new Joel Garner rather than the new Bishen Bedi, and the selectors have encouraged this attitude. Promising young cricketers thus realise that their chances of getting into a county or test side as a spinner are slim, and they adapt accordingly.

Helping the unemployed

Brian Maurice, Projects Organiser, WEA Community Centre, 1a High Street, Pontypool, Gwent

Philip Clayton's article on the labour movement's reaction to unemployment (*NS* 20 August) concentrates too much on the failures and lack of response.

Here in Pontypool we have a very active TUC Centre for the unemployed which is enthusiastically supported by the local council and Trades Council and more importantly by the unemployed themselves.

Of course we are not able to cater for large numbers of unemployed people at any one time but we can claim that we have helped many people by campaigning for improvements in the provisionary services for the unemployed available locally.

Through a Community Enterprise Programme Scheme we have been able to sustain a range of activities. Our emphasis has been on developing communication skills and recreational opportunities for the unemployed as well as a very effective system of Welfare Advice.

For many reasons we do not feel able to mount political campaigns to change government policy, but we are concentrating on providing people with what they want to help cope with unemployment. This boils down to maintaining and improving morale through organisation. In the long run this may well prove more effective politically.

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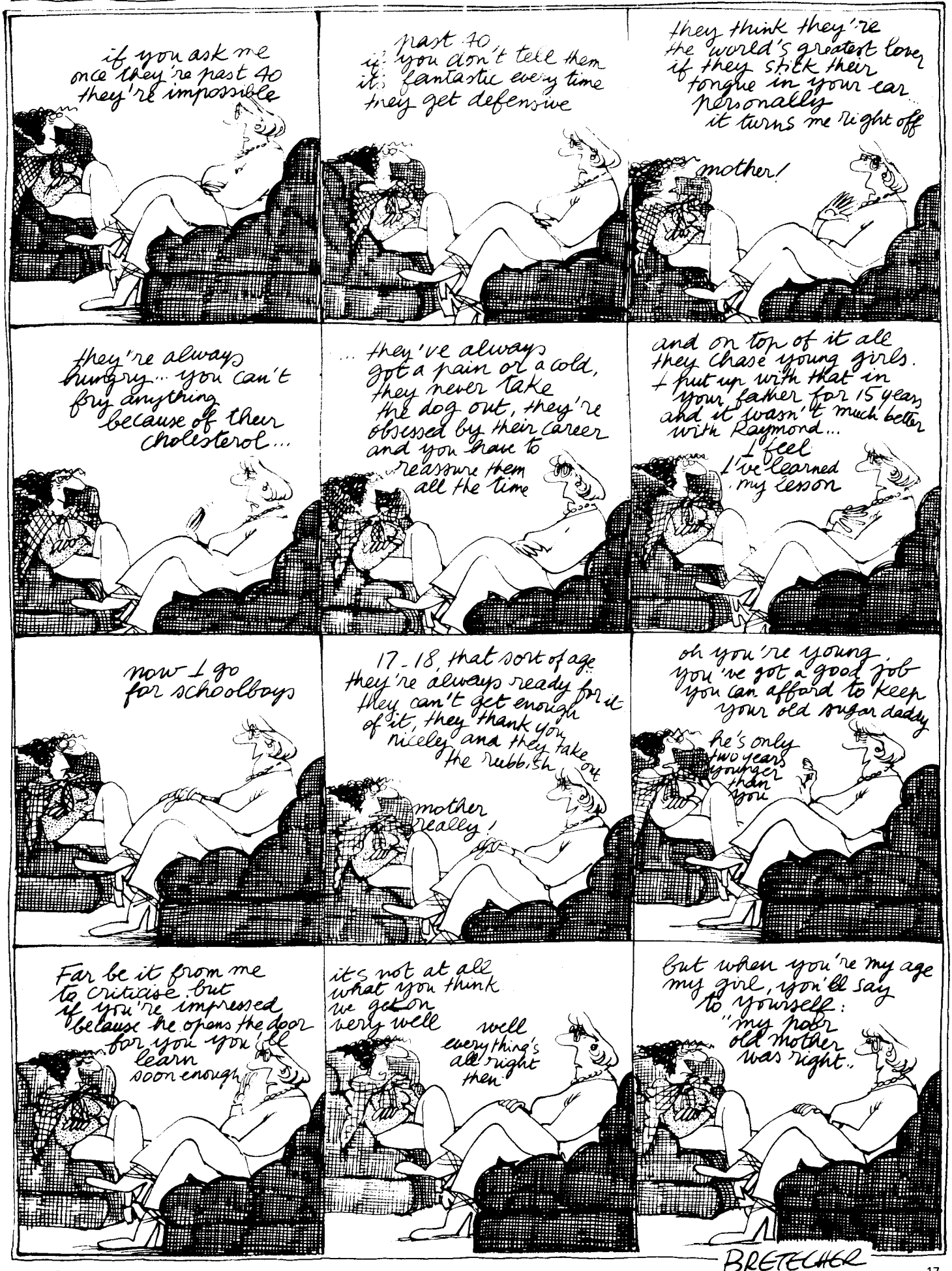
BRETECHER

MY MOTHER TOLD ME


if you ask me once they're past 40 they're impossible
past 40 if you don't tell them it's fantastic every time they get defensive
they think they're the world's greatest lover if they stick their tongue in your ear personally it turns me right off
mother!
they're always hungry... you can't buy anything because of their cholesterol...
... they've always got a pain or a cold, they never take the dog out, they're obsessed by their career and you have to reassure them all the time
and on top of it all they chase young girls. I put up with that in your father for 15 years and it wasn't much better with Raymond... I feel I've learned my lesson
now I go for schoolboys
17-18, that sort of age they're always ready for it they can't get enough of it, they thank you nicely and they take out the rubbish
mother really!
oh you're young, you've got a good job you can afford to keep your old sugar daddy
he's only two years younger than you
Far be it from me to criticise but if you're impressed because he opens the door for you you'll learn soon enough
it's not at all what you think we get on very well
well everything's all right then
but when you're my age my girl, you'll say to yourself: "my poor old mother was right.."
BRETECHER

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Their own reserves

ART—1: DENIS DUERDEN on the artists of Australia

AUSTRALIAN PAINTERS and Australian paintings have returned to Australia and here are two books, one by an Australian art historian, the other the Australian work of an Australian artist and his conversations about it presented by an Australian art critic who is also a gallery curator in Australia. In the late Fifties many of the leading Australian artists, including Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd and a clan of Boyds, John Perceval, and Charles Blackman, were to be found living in London, exhibiting in London, and constantly interrogating themselves about why they stayed in voluntary exile. Then years later most of them returned to Australia and their work went with them. Australian dealers came and bought up everything they could find and exported it to sell to hungry collectors in Australia. Richard Haese's book ends at the earlier point before the artists' exodus to live in London, concentrating on their lives in Australia from 1930 to 1950. Elwyn Lynn, collaborating with the artist, reproduces very few of the works Sidney Nolan did in England but uses instead much more of his early work and his more recent work, all done in Australia.

The quotations from Nolan's conversations demonstrate a pre-occupation with what it is like to be an Australian painter. Nolan constantly emphasises that it is his country's light which makes his painting distinctive. 'The Australian sunlight isolates objects, disperses them, gives them emphasis, but not equal emphasis', he declared in April 1978. Perhaps it is this light which gives the Australian artist his intense conviction of living in an isolated and unique community.

There seems, however, to be a general assumption by Australians that it is virtuous to live in separate and inviolate communities, and this is reflected in the Australian government's attitude to the Aborigine. In the first of her articles describing a return visit to her native country in the *Observer* of 1 August, Germaine Greer recounted how she failed to get a permit to enter one of the Aborigine reservations (which she says, cover thousands of square miles) and refused to trespass there without it.

She talks of 'the psychic distance' that the black community wished 'to be observed between them and the interlopers whom they had allowed upon their land'. We are reminded by this of Arthur Boyd's powerful 'Bride' series about the tragic outcome of a marriage between an Aborigine and a white school-teacher. The wide-open eyes of the Aborigine staring from his dismayed black face while he is left holding the bride's bouquet declare that he did not ask for the attentions of his liberal admirer. In Boyd's paintings, and a thousand accounts of 'the rape' of the Aborigine, there is a sense that the Australian artists, writers and film-makers regard the Aborigines in their reservations wistfully. They too would like to live preserved with a separate consciousness and separate sensibility.

This theme is the constantly repeated motif of Haese's detailed history of 'the revolutionary years' of Australian art, which, he writes, led to a discovery of Australia and a sense of being Australian. The title of the book is taken from an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1962, which signalled to the artists a new critical interest in their native country and encouraged their returning migration. In the earlier years, from 1930 to 1950, they had deliberately turned their backs on European traditions and influences and attempted to discover their own forms of expression to the point of embracing means and techniques that European artists had rejected. Nolan's early and brilliant use of newly-invented commercial colours and contempt for the artist's brush are clearly reproduced here. The artists also attempted to establish distinctively Australian myths: the outlaw, Ned Kelly (Nolan); the explorers, Burke and Wills (Nolan); the Aborigine's white bride (Boyd); and they painted long allegorical series based on them.

These two books then represent Australian artists as if they wish to live and work unmolested in their own reserves with their own history and their own audience, an archetypal 'primitive' society. But the powerful resonance of their images has left an altogether different impression in our outsiders' consciousness. Pollock and Rauschenberg were their contemporaries and collaborators in a wider world. Picasso and Ernst and numerous historical monuments recently erected encircled the encroaching horizon and there was no escape from then. □

***Head of a Soldier* by Sidney Nolan**

Rebels and Precursors by RICHARD HAESE *Allen Lane* £25

Sidney Nolan – Australia by ELWYN LYNN and SIDNEY NOLAN *Bay Books* £25

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ART–2: Stephen Brook

Loose label

A New and Noble School by QUENTIN BELL *Macdonald* £10.95

Quentin Bell, the descendant and custodian of the Bloomsbury group, now turns his attention to another controversial coterie. In *A New and Noble School* (Ruskin's words) Professor Bell has little fresh to add to what has already been said in other books about Pre-Raphaelitism. His is an easy-going introduction, which opens with a good chapter on the movement's antecedents and origins; knowledge of what they were combatting helps us to understand the impact made by the small group of painters who formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848.

The next section of the book deals, somewhat haphazardly, with Millais and Holman Hunt and Rossetti, and Bell concludes with a long chapter on what he loosely calls the Second Generation, which includes Morris and Burne-Jones. This is the weakest section of the book; although he has some interesting things to say about Burne-Jones, Professor Bell too easily lapses into cosy discussion of Victorian artists' penchant for marrying beneath them, and other such entertaining but marginal topics.

I can't blame him for rambling on in this fashion, since, as he himself points out, the PRB was at an end by 1855. Bell subscribes nevertheless to the legend that there was such a thing as the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and this obliges him to spin out the book to more than its necessary length. Legends bear some relation to truth, but the more I look at Pre-Raphaelite paintings, the less useful that particular label becomes.

Of the seven artists who formed the Brotherhood, three are more or less forgotten, one was a sculptor, and the three others – Millais, Hunt, Rossetti – were artists of unmistakable individuality, marked more by their differences than by any common programme they may have subscribed to for a few years. The qualities Professor Bell identifies as the distinguishing characteristics of Pre-Raphaelitism are moral earnestness, fidelity to nature, exactness of detail, brightness of colour. These qualities are indeed to be found, in varying degrees, in Holman Hunt and early Millais, and to a lesser extent in Rossetti's work.

However, as Bell observes, there is a large group of Victorian artists who were not members of the Brotherhood – such as W. A. Collins, Henry Wallis and Ford Madox Brown – but whose work displays all the characteristics we associate with the movement. The pictorial and technical qualities we label Pre-Raphaelite are, surely, the qualities we loosely regard as typically mid-Victorian (allowing, of course, that there were also other, more academic, groups at work).

The original Brotherhood was, in Rossetti's own words, 'friendship *(la camaraderie)* rather than any real stylistic collaboration'. Ruskin, the champion of the PRB, did not hail their virtues until three years after its formation, and a few years later, by the mid-1850s, the principal brothers were already going their separate ways. The fidelity of Millais' 'The Carpenter's Shop', which received such abuse at the 1850 Academy exhibition, was soon abandoned by the worldly artist. Even the earnest Hunt discarded truthfulness when, in the wildly popular 'Light of the World', he clothed Jesus in finery and jewels. Like most good artists, the so-called Pre-Raphaelites were weak on theory, which they could safely leave to Ruskin.

As for what Bell calls the Second Generation, it is certainly possible to see family resemblances between the work of Burne-Jones and that of some of his Pre-Raphaelite predecessors, but it seems a diminution of the great achievement of Burne-Jones and Morris to see them as the heirs, or the fag-end, of an artistic movement that had long ceased to have any coherence.

It would not be fair to single out Professor Bell for trying to pump fresh blood into a category that no longer seems helpful. Timothy Hilton, in his stimulating book on Pre-Raphaelitism, does the same, even though he writes, 'Pre-Raphaelitism cannot be defined; it was too various'. Quentin Bell, in his amiable, often indulgent, book, is just as fully aware of all the reasons why the Pre-Raphaelite label sheds only the palest light on some very remarkable and very individual painters. Surely this awareness suggests that a radical rethinking is long overdue. □

BIOGRAPHY: Peter Wilsher

Grinding wheels

Charles Babbage: Pioneer of the Computer by ANTHONY HYMAN *Oxford* £12.50

General knowledge question: Who was the first British prime minister to put public money behind the development of a practical computing machine? Answer: Not Clement Attlee in the heady days of 1945, nor Harold ('White Hot') Wilson in 1964, but that rock-ribbed old Tory, the Duke of Wellington, in 1829. And if that languid, ineffectual Liberal Lord Melbourne had not bone-headedly cut off the cash-flow in 1834, who knows, London might still today be unchallenged capital of a world empire, knit together by an Information Revolution come a hundred years or more ahead of its time.

The man who could, just conceivably, have made that possible was born, the son of a West Country banker and merchant, near London's Elephant & Castle in 1791. Charles Babbage grew up to become one of the finest mathematicians of his time, an inveterate inventor, master of every known industrial art, sharp critic of the Royal Society, co-founder of the British Association, friend of the Brunels, the Stevensons, the Herschels and most of the worthwhile scientists and engineers in Europe. He was a passionate believer in the importance of applied science, and his warnings, in the early 1830s, against the snobbish divorce between 'pure' research and the needs of the factory, point up only too perceptively why Britain has long ceased to be the workshop of the world.

Babbage himself and his great pioneering conceptions, the Difference Engine and the Analytical Engines, which embodied to such an astonishing degree the essence of the modern stored-programme computer, were among the most prominent victims of that deadening divorce. As early as 1823, thinking about the errors that always crept in when logarithms were calculated by hand, he visualised the basic requirements of a machine which could accurately and economically grind out the mathematical tables for which the 19th century was developing such a voracious need. With his unique range of knowledge and social acquaintance he was perfectly capable, on his own, of designing the machine, developing a notation to describe its workings, devising the machine tools needed to manufacture its component parts, and persuading a Chancellor of the Exchequer (Lord Goderich) to part with £1,500 as seed-money. But then, as soon as he needed the serious co-operation of others – manufacturers, fellow-scientists, civil servants and financiers – he ran into misunderstanding, frustration and trouble. The combination of meanness and myopia, so familiar in the history of inventions, entombed his extraordinary talents and when he died, in 1871, almost 80 years old, all that was left to show for his efforts was one, beautifully-crafted portion of the Difference Engine, in perfect working order, a marvellous set of engineering drawings for the Analytical Engines, almost as beautiful and imaginative as those by da Vinci, and a half-forgotten treasure-trove of insights, formulae and calculations whose significance is only now being rediscovered by the generation which has produced NASA's intergalactic number crunchers and the 72-byte Random Access Memory chip. Most of the Babbage memorabilia are lovingly preserved in the South Kensington Science Museum, a monument to what might have been.

This, the first full-length biography, does not make a wholly satisfying book. Part of Babbage's trouble was that he was not a very good communicator, at least as far as his own work is concerned. He was far too active – standing for parliament, organising other people's election campaigns, popping down to Her Majesty's Theatre with Michael Faraday (surely the most high powered team in stage history) to try out a new system of ballet-lighting, working out the essentials of a 'black-box' transport recorder to justify Brunel's broad-gauge railway notions on the Great Western, attending endless conferences, *conversazioni* and scientific *soirées* – to set down a clear, coherent, comprehensive account of his truly innovative work. In any case, its evolution passed through so many stages, in the interstices of such a long, multi-faceted life that there was probably no one moment, except perhaps on his death bed, that a final, complete version was possible. The closest is a child's guide set of notes

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prepared by Byron's daughter, Lady Ada Lovelace, who was herself no slouch as a mathematician, but never pretended to be in Babbage's league. As a result, the sources are extremely patchy and fragmented, and as far as the central achievement is concerned, virtually non-existent. Given that Babbage's life was almost entirely in the mind, when he was not travelling, looking at esoteric manufacturing activity, or engaged in social converse (his wife died early, and he does not seem to have been very close to his children) there is a real problem of imposing some shape on the narrative. This, Anthony Hyman, whose main previous work is a computer dictionary, has not entirely solved.

The real pity, though, is that he has deliberately avoided giving his own assessment of what Babbage actually achieved. Given that he was working, despite his frolic with Faraday, in a largely pre-electric environment, could his essentially mechanical construction, with the engineering precision available, have produced a genuinely workable computing machine? Hyman is clearly knowledgeable enough to have a shrewd idea, but he keeps it to himself. What he does give us, though, is a painful and only too credible description of a creative mind entangled with the Circumlocution Office of officialdom and professional jealousy. In fact there is some evidence that Dickens, who knew him, had Babbage in mind when he imagined that archetypal bureaucratic killing-ground:

> 'A dozen years ago, he perfects an invention. . . . He addresses himself to the Government. The moment he addresses himself to the Government he becomes a public offender! Sir, he ceases to be an innocent citizen and becomes a culprit. He is treated, from that instant, as a man who has done some infernal action. . . .'

And so forth. How many Babbages, one wonders, are caught in the grinding wheels of Thatcher-land? □

Mike Jenkins

Merthyr

There's less 'appenin' in this town
than in the naffin' Arctic Circle, boys.

Park-benches for the under-aged,
pubs when you start to shave.

Learn our great boxin' tradition
at closin'-time Saturdays.

Rock music's too loud, boys,
it'd bring all our derelict 'ouses down.

Dancin's not allowed, see,
'cept in the privacy of your own 'ome.

So I'm a trainee boozer,
fork-lift 'and at the bar.

Aye, we do 'ave a Community Centre,
but it's empty as my pockets.

Aye, we do 'ave meetin' places:
jammed in, standin' up at record shops.

Well aye, we do 'ave a swimmin'-pool,
open when the sun says 'Yes!'

The ducks in the park do 'ave better
facilities,
the sheep more freedom to roam.

MEMOIRS: Basil Davidson

Self-manager

Reminiscences: The Struggle for Recognition and Independence: The New Yugoslavia 1944-1957 by EDVARD KARDELJ
Blond & Briggs £11.95

When Edvard Kardelj died at 69 on the threshold of the 1980s, he had probably become the most creative of all the revolutionary thinkers of his generation in any of the Slav lands, and perhaps elsewhere as well; and yet, outside Yugoslavia, he remained one of the least known. His Slovene bookishness and dislike of razzmatazz (very different from Tito in that respect) did something to account for a general under-estimate, abroad, of the originality and force of his achievements. At least in the West there was a tendency to suppose that he was merely Tito's instrument, just as earlier, before the crucial break with Stalin in 1948, he had easily appeared as the Cominform's instrument or little more. However absurdly in contrast with the man's actual character and actions, he was even labelled an apparatchik.

Yet Kardelj could look back on extraordinary enterprises carried to success. While still quite young he had played a key rôle in the great Slovene insurrection of 1941 and the four-year partisan war that followed, as well as in helping to frame and realise the political strategies of the wider Yugoslav movement of liberation. After 1945 he took himself, and helped to take others, through painful times of readjustment to the realities of Stalin and Stalin's Soviet terror until, early in the 1950s, he again began to bring originality to bear. From then onwards his chief concern was to forge and weld systems of self-managerial devolution by means of which, with whatever false starts and failures, Yugoslavia today stands on its own firm political ground and continues to evolve.

Kardelj had a central part as theorist and practical organiser in each of these always difficult phases. They were, for him, successive forms of the same organic development towards a revolutionary democracy, with each later form growing from origins in the grass-roots committees of basic self-government during the war years. 'The nucleus of everything we have developed and are developing further today,' he repeated in a characteristic statement of 1976, 'was already present in the national-liberation committees of the partisan insurrection.'

Yugoslav military successes were such that the outside world has generally failed to perceive the decisive value, for what came after, of that political groundwork laid down in 1941-45. The committees of popular representation, local rule, and civilian support were the sinews of military resistance and survival; and yet much comment has either ignored them or seen them as propagandist décor, an error of judgment into which no one who was there at the time could have fallen for a moment. Given this central importance both for the winning of the war and for the self-managerial systems that came later, these memoirs ought to be of riveting interest. Kardelj died before being able to complete them for earlier years but the volume that we have here, happily reinforced with some excellent notes and appendices by ten leading colleagues, shows that he lacked the gift to make them so.

His editors claim that these memoirs 'constitute a valuable historical document', but for my part they brought a disappointment. The prudent statesman has all too often got the better of the memoirist. About the immediate postwar period of narrow administrative dictatorship, for example, he tells us 'that a rather too bureaucratic rule had been gradually taking root in Yugoslavia'.

But what did he say at the time? His editors have had the good idea of reminding us in an appendix. In 1946 we find him using an altogether more appropriate language. 'Bureaucratic rot', he declared then, 'is beginning to creep into our state apparatus', and much else to the same exact effect. No wonder: for the rot was far advanced and Yugoslavia threatened by most unhappy dramas. Only in measuring those tensions can one understand just how creative, and even how heroic, were the steps taken to resolve them. But Kardelj's memoirs assume all that.

At least for the specialist, they add usefully to knowledge in two chief directions. One of these lies in further exploring the inner record of the break with Stalin in and after 1948, although even here the treatment is rather anodyne; while the other opens a wider background to the reasons why any form of Balkan federation proved impossible.

Kardelj adds to what we have learned from other sources about Stalin's personality and perversities, and throws in some vignettes of other figures on that scene, not least Georgi Dimitrov. But the memorable nature and meaning of the man himself, or the challenge of the times through which he lived, scarcely ever come through. □

Among this week's contributors:

DENIS DUERDEN's books include *African Art and Literature: The Invisible Present.*

PETER WILSHER is the Foreign Editor of the *Sunday Times.*

BASIL DAVIDSON's books include *Special Operations Europe: Scenes from the Anti-Nazi War.*

HARRIETT GILBERT is the Books Editor of *City Limits.*

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Shorter reviews

Music and Politics by HANS WERNER HENZE *Faber* £15

Henze is the most infuriating and uneven of contemporary composers, and it is doubly infuriating to find that unevenness reflected in this collection of writings, translated by Peter Labanyi. The title might more accurately and cynically have been rendered as 'Music, then Politics', for it has sometimes seemed that a considerable lyric talent – Henze's music of the 1950s and early '60s gives ample evidence of that – has in the last decade and a half buried itself beneath its strident left-wing message; creative self-indulgence has gained a veneer of intellectual respectability.

This is not to doubt the validity of Henze's convictions. If this collection does nothing else, at least it demonstrates how the seeds of socialism were planted in the composer inevitably and indelibly by his experiences in post-war Germany, how they were quietly nurtured by his contacts with the composer Paul Dessau and how they were brought to full militant fruit by the Vietnam protest movement and rise of black consciousness of the 1960s. Henze's estrangement from the mainstream of the post-war avant garde is recounted not without some bitterness; it began as a purely stylistic schism and rapidly acquired ideological overtones, and with it came his move to live in Italy that brought him into contact with Marxist thought there. How increasingly Henze has sought to bring his music to serve his political aims is demonstrated through the series of extended discussions of major works that occupies a major portion of this book. The few theoretical essays it contains are disappointingly thin, and it is difficult not to draw the conclusion that Henze regards his cause as better served by the naive, many-layered allegories of his works than by any more refined theory of art.

That occasionally he can still strike home with a work that fulfils its function both as art and political broadsheet we know from a handful of pieces produced over the past ten years. They arise quite unpredictably, and it's odd that the finest of them, the song cycle *Voices*, completed in 1973, should receive only passing mentions. One lives in hope; Henze may yet strike the balance he has been seeking, and once again fulfil his talent. There are few enough composers of his stature, and fewer still willing to serve a cause as faithfully as he does.

Andrew Clements

Kitchen Sink, or Swim? by DEIRDRE SANDERS with JANE REED *Pelican* £2.50

Of all the books on women's politics published in the last few years, this is, in many ways, the most encouraging. Sanders' and Reed's journalistic experience is not with *Spare Rib* or the *Guardian*, but with magazines such as *Woman's Own* whose concerns are supposed to be romance, the royal family and diets. It is to the readers of such publications (full-time mothers, full-time housewives, factory workers, clerks) that this book owes its existence – an existence annihilating the myth that only lesbian Marxist intellectuals are angry at women's oppression.

The areas studied are those of domestic (unpaid) and public (paid) employment. The approach is strictly reformist, but, for all that, uncompromising, and every chapter of authorial fact, analysis and suggestion is reinforced by women's accounts of their paid employment, housework, child-care and care of dependent adults. The emergent picture is cohesive. If the heterosexual family unit is taken, by and large, for granted, other structures of the patriarchy are hammered. Women are not demanding the right to work in boring, low-paid, full-time jobs, but most would rather that than nothing (for reasons financial and psychological) and those who would not, would like some recognition for domestic work.

The need for child-care facilities is the book's most repeated cry, but criticism is also levelled at women's career opportunities, work structures unsympathetic to mothers and management-union failures to recognise that fathers are also parents. ('I see,' a manager is quoted as saying when told that the men in his work-force supported demands for a creche, 'you mean that our male employees' *wives'* children would use the creche.') Sanders and Reed make a sound case for a programme of increased social services, job-sharing and shared parenting, but it is their interviewees' experiences of poverty, overwork and frustration that give their case its power.

Harriett Gilbert

Common Security: a Programme for Disarmament *Pan* £1.95
Debate on Disarmament edited by MICHAEL CLARKE and MARJORIE MOWLAM *Routledge* £3.95

Talk of 'limited nuclear war' is folly, deterrence is 'but a temporary expedient', East-West talks are stagnating – on all these points, the 17 members of Olof Palme's Commission add their voices to the chorus raised against the arms race. Their proposals for action would lead us, if adopted, along a route of balanced disarmament towards a global policy of common security. Those innumerable politicians who claim to be seeking multilateral disarmament now have a blueprint from which to work.

David Owen, one of the Commissioners, argues, in his Introduction to the British edition, that disarmers can forget their differences and rally behind this blueprint: multilateralists and unilateralists 'have more in common than they often realise'. The failure of the second UN Special Session, and the lack of progress at Geneva, meanwhile oblige us to regard diplomatically orchestrated 'negotiated disarmament' with special scepticism.

The ground for such scepticism, and the arguments in favour of unilateral initiatives by individual nations and peoples, are excellently set forth in Johan Galtung's 'alternative Reith Lecture'. Galtung's is the most original contribution to this series, given last autumn at Newcastle University and now published as *Debate on Disarmament*. There are also pieces by Mary Kaldor, Michael Pentz, the Right Rev John Robinson, Jonathan Dimbleby and E. P. Thompson.

M. H. Ryle

Father of the House: Fifty Years in Politics by JOHN PARKER *Routledge* £10.50

John Parker is 76, and has sat in the House of Commons since 1935, longer than any other MP. He is therefore known as Father of the House. According to your viewpoint, he is either a parliamentary stalwart who has given years of unstinting service to his country and to the Labour movement, never seeking the rewards of high ministerial office; or he is a time-serving placeman whose socialist fervour waned many years back and who has since been content to survive as backbench lobby-fodder. What is interesting about this book is not the actual content, but rather the reactions it will produce in these two camps. An imaginary dialogue between them might run as follows:

Parliamentary Stalwart School: John Parker? Absolute salt of the earth. Father knew him at Marlborough and Oxford. He took me under his wing when I came in in '66, and he knows a thing or two about history, I can tell you. He's rubbed shoulders with all the greats. Seen them all come and go.

Lobby-Fodder School: I read his book because I thought it might give me some kind of insight into the changing nature of the House, but he seems to think that the most important thing that's happened is that frock-coats are out and beards are in.

PSS: That's very unfair. What about that Private Member's Bill that legitimised one's bastard offspring? And that other one that let you play ping-pong on Sunday? That's the kind of unselfish, unsung spadework that was the very essence of the man.

LFS: Are you really telling me *that* will bring about an irreversible shift of power towards the working people of this country? Most reasonably diligent civil servants have a greater effect on British public life. As far as I can tell, the most revolutionary thing he ever did was to move the motion censuring those MPs involved in the Poulson affair – and that isn't even mentioned in the book.

PSS: What about his constituency work? Impeccable, especially when he had all those bolshie car workers at Dagenham to deal with.

LFS: But he hardly mentions industrial relations at Fords. And when he does talk about the workers, it's like an ornithologist describing an unusual species of bird.

PSS: But he broadened the horizons of the Labour Party. All that unbegrudged travel – Austria, Yugoslavia, Russia, Ethiopia. That can't have been any fun.

LFS: Junketing at other people's expense.

PSS: I think you're taking far too ideological a line here. The PLP needs people to lay the foundations for change, to deal with the minutiae of our parliamentary revolution. Infantry as well as generals.

LFS: Sheep as well as shepherds?

Frank Kane

NOSTALGIC FICTION

describes three very different novels: Samuel Beckett's *Ill Seen Ill Said*, a poetic, descriptive, disquieting text portraying another Beckett woman, at sunrise, at sunset, "like the last wisps of day when the curtain closes." (£4.95); *Lillelord* by the distinguished Norwegian novelist Johan Borgen catches the feeling of Oslo in 1900, where the protagonist, an angelic spoilt child, takes a sinister turn. "The work of a highly conscious and intelligent artist." *Scotsman* (£8.95); *Pélagie-la-Charrette* by Antonine Maillet, the epic of a French-speaking family evicted from Canada by the British in 1755 who, through the years of the American Revolution, fought their way back to the Maritimes (£6.95). German classics are Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* in six vols in the new Waidson translation (each £3.95) and *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, Grimmelshausen's epic novel of the wars of religion (£4.95).

AND FOR OPERA LOVERS

8 new Opera Guides in the ENO/ROH series: Verdi's *Rigoletto* and *Falstaff*, Puccini's *Bohème* and *Tosca*, also *Boris Godunov*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, and *Carmen*. Each with complete two-language libretto, many background articles, crammed with information (£2 each). Georg Kaiser *Plays Vol 2* contains 5 plays from the outstanding expressionist dramatist from *David and Goliath* (1912) to *The Raft of the Medusa* (1943) (£4.95). *Adolphe Appia 1862-1928* is an illustrated account of the life and work of the father of modern theatrical design (£4.50).

THE FENIANS IN ENGLAND

by Patrick Quinlivan and Paul Rose is a history of Irish nationalist violence in Victorian Britain and the national hysteria that led to the last public execution (£10.95).

JOHN CALDER 18 Brewer Street London W1

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THEATRE: Benedict Nightingale

Operating theatre

Hamlet by SHAKESPEARE *Warehouse*
Rocket to the Moon by CLIFFORD ODETS *Hampstead*

Sophie Baker

Anton Lesser as Hamlet

I SEEM to recall Jonathan Miller publicly renouncing the stage for medicine several years back, so perhaps his claim to be doing precisely that now should be taken a bit sceptical. **Hamlet** is his last theatrical production, pending a positively and utterly final one at some unspecified time in the future, itself to be followed by the odd, absolutely unrepeatable return from retirement. At any rate, I hope this will be the case, because there's no-one with whom I've so much enjoyed wrangling in print over the past years. Remember Miller's *Merchant,* with Olivier a stately Rothschild in a top-hat pursued by as mean-spirited a bunch of 'Christians' as imagination could conceive? Or remember his *Tempest,* with Ariel transformed into Kenyatta with a fly-whisk, every inch the prime minister designate of Prospero's island colony? In his undeniably skilled hands the Shakespeare production became spare-part surgery. Plays came off the table the same yet different. A new heart here, an extra arm or leg there, a brain transplant over there – anything seemed possible in Dr Miller's operating theatre.

What makes his determination to substitute real patients for dramatic ones the more frustrating to me is that his new *Hamlet* is actually very different. It would be nice to know if it betokened a conversion to 'straight' Shakespeare – or, to put it more precisely, if it meant that Miller is less committed to selective emphasis than he once was, less eager to slant plays in limited and limiting directions. For this is, believe it or not, a production in which that bravura intelligence of his seems concerned only to find what is in the text, then to illuminate and enhance it, leaving the audience free to contemplate the result in all its natural complexity. It is full of deft, apt touches, many of them far from obvious or predictable. A more conventional overall approach does not, as it turns out, preclude unconventional insights.

Two or three such are to be found in the last scene alone. What a good idea for Laertes to have Hamlet at his mercy, and at first to resist pricking him with the poisoned sword. That reminds us that he is, as the odds of the king's wager suggests, the better fencer, and also helps prepare us for a last-gasp repentance and reconciliation that can seem artificial and even maudlin in performance. Again, Claudius pushes aside Hamlet in this production and voluntarily swigs the dregs of the poisoned cup: business I have seen before, but never so pointedly and sensibly handled. In the first place, it avoids the awkwardness of John Shrapnel's commanding king being forced to drink his death-potion by a Hamlet who, as embodied by Anton Lesser, is very much slighter and lighter than himself. In the second, it proves the truth of Claudius's claim to be unable to survive without a wife 'so conjunctive to my life and soul'. Indeed, Shrapnel's king tries to die hand-in-hand with the woman he has just had helplessly to watch in her own last throes, only to have his fingers prised away by his still-vindictive nephew.

Only one directional touch brought back memories of the old, tendentious Miller, the one who once presumed to turn *Lear* into a case-study of senility; and that came at the end of a notably thoughtful interpretation of Ophelia. As Kathryn Pogson plays her, she's a naive, rather gauche girl, abjectly dependent on Hamlet's affection and so eager to hook him that she actually tries to pull him offstage in the nunnery scene, presumably to her bedchamber. Indeed, the prince's 'where's your father?' and subsequent anger, which almost all productions nowadays pass off as the result of him glimpsing Polonius or guessing he's eavesdropping, here seems to be indignation at being sexually manipulated by this wayward, inconsistent and disturbingly unchaperoned girl. So far so good – in spite of a suspicion that the idea is rather better than Ms Pogson's ability to enact it. It is more than usually logical that this Ophelia, hoping so much of her boy-friend and being rewarded with rejection, public humiliation and the murder of her father, should end by running stark mad. The problem is the way she does it: drooling, slurping, crazed blinking, obsessive scratching of hair and lips, and no distribution of rosemary or rue at all. The girl said to turn madness 'to favour and to prettiness' becomes some sad specimen observed by Dr Miller in the locked ward, a piece of clinical reportage rather than the cracked belle Shakespeare actually created.

Yet it seems grudging to belabour a single eccentricity in a production generally so felicitous, so fluently staged, and so successful at making strengths of its limitations – meaning, among other things, making more of Lesser. This Hamlet does, you see, lack danger as well as weight. There is no good reason for Shrapnel's brusque and burly Claudius to fear him. But since Lesser's point seems to be that Hamlet is too immature to bear the strain of the ghost's awesome injunctions and his own unstoppable self-doubts, this liability becomes a gain – or at least an essential aspect of a perfectly tenable interpretation. He explains, as fiercer and more formidable Hamlets can't and don't, why the prince delays and delays, until the act of revenge is forced upon him. Moreover, he manages this with skill and panache, whether he's childishly blubbing after the departure of his dead father, or painstakingly rehearsing the arguments for and against suicide, or grabbing at his mother, making funny faces, cackling and sniggering, and generally behaving in a way less than appropriate for someone who has just killed the king's chief minister. It is a lively performance, and one well adapted to Lesser's present abilities. No doubt he'll return to give us a solider *Hamlet* some time in the future. How nice if his director that day could be none other than Dr Jonathan Miller.

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If THE CLIFFORD ODETS of **Rocket to the Moon** regards marriage as oppressive, and he seems to do so, it's mainly because of the supposed tendency of women to be come demanding and prevent men fulfilling their talents: not a view likely to go down well with modern Hampstead audiences. And yet the play can't be dismissed as a piece of old-fashioned heresy. It is too well written, and, for all its fundamental male chauvinism, too generous when it comes to making judgments. Its serio-comic style, cool yet caring, produces several moments whose wry humanity are likely to put you in mind of Chekhov; and Robin Lefevre's fine production maintains that tone at times when the script veers towards the earnest melodrama one associates with the play's place and date: America, 1938.

Briefly, David Burke is the dentist who has become stodgily becalmed in middle age, mediocrity and a barren marriage; Annabel Leventon his clamorous wife; Harold Innocent his failed and despairing colleague (a touch of social criticism here); and John Woodvine his alternately puckish and baleful father-in-law. They are all excellent; and, indeed, my only reservation involves the play's catalyst and anti-heroine, an innocent yet knowing sexpot dangerous to all men, but especially to poor, menopausal Burke. Cleo, as she's not accidentally called, is played by Mary Maddox with a pert wriggle of face and body that is often amusing, sometimes touching, but always insufficient. Innate magnetism is needed – and quite, quite missing. □

MUSIC: Andrew Clements

Never say die

The Makropulos Case *Coliseum*
The Cunning Little Vixen MACKERRAS
Decca D257D2 (two records)

London has been able to see both the ENO's production of **The Makropulos Case** and Josephine Barstow as Emilia Marty before – the Welsh National Opera brought the production to the Dominion with Elisabeth Söderström as the 339-year-old heroine and Miss Barstow sang the part in the English National's original staging nine years ago. But in its present incarnation, borrowed from the complete Janácek cycle being prepared by Welsh and Scottish Operas, the production provides Miss Barstow with one of her most exciting and triumphant roles to date.

Emilia Marty was the last in the line of dramatic heroines in Janácek's operas from *Jenufa* onwards; his final stage work, *From the House of Dead,* contains no female characters at all. It is not simply chronology that makes Emilia the most facinating of these women; her last monologue, more overwhelming because of the clipped restraint of much of the vocal writing up to that point, is one of Janácek's great dramatic coups. Suddenly all the artificial trappings – the concept of a woman who cannot die – can be discarded in the face of a passion that is totally authentic and in which the two-dimensionality of the other characters (and of Emilia herself to some extent) ceases to be important.

Miss Barstow paces her performance most intelligently, viewing that final monologue as her ultimate goal and preserving her voice accordingly. When the point is reached she finds a totally convincing tone, though for the only time in the evening her words become indistinguishable. It matters surprisingly little; where in the expository parts of the opera such a lack of information might have been disastrous, here it is the raw passion that matters, and this is precisely what Miss Barstow conveys. She has a fine list of electrifying portrayals already to her credit and this must be added to them.

The sheer acting ability that sets her apart from most of her British opera contemporaries separates her too from the rest of the cast. It is a memorable production, but essentially a production bound together by this Emilia Marty to become rather more than the sum of its parts. David Poutney's direction is straightforward and unfussy, but at crucial moments under-detailed; characters sometimes seem at a loose end on the expanses of the Coliseum stage. Maria Björnson's settings delight in portraying the debris and trivia of immortality at the expense of creating striking images. Apart from Miss Barstow the cast is reliable rather than inspired. Kenneth Woollam's twittish Gregor and Geoffrey Chard's impersonal Prus go for clarity of delivery over tonal beauty; Eric Shilling's Kolenaty and Stuart Kale's Hauk-Sendorf are basically stock eccentrics. The orchestral playing under Mark Elder is, however, more than reliable. Some passing uncertainties in the mysterious prelude to the first act were hardly repeated; thereafter the patchwork construction of the accompaniments was sharply detailed and the cruelly exposed brass and string writing triumphantly negotiated. Between them, Josephine Barstow and the conductor ensure an account of the opera that is far from ordinary.

The Cunning Little Vixen immediately precedes *Makropolus* in the canon of Janácek's operas, part of the explosion of creativity that overtook the composer in his seventies. The *Vixen* is to my ears the most joyous of all his works; not the least of its achievement is a total lack of sentimentality, even in a libretto that dares to bring woodland animals to the stage. The *Vixen* is the fourth instalment of Decca's project to record all the operas with the Vienna Philharmonic under Charles Mackerras, and conductor and orchestra are the stars of the present recording; never lingering and delivering the score with the lightning changes of mood and colour that characterise Janácek's finest music. In the title role Lucia Popp is perfect, mixing piquancy with enchantment; Eva Randova makes the Fox a bluff, simple foil. Dalibor Jedlicka as the Forester sometimes seems a shade underpowered, especially when the Vienna Philharmonic is at full throttle, yet he sings with unfailing intelligence. All in all the set is a delight; it is furnished with a superb introductory essay by John Tyrrell and manages to reproduce 50 of the cartoons that were the starting point for Janácek's score. Not to be missed. □

TELEVISION: William Boyd

Artist and critic

MANY of the details of Egon Schiele's short life are the sort that film-makers dream of: the evocative setting of turn-of-the-century Vienna, contemporary furore over the work, murky goings-on with under-age models, a prison sentence in connection with said goings-on, exotic minor characters, a hint of madness and the obligatory early death from Spanish flu in 1918. Why then was this **Globe Theatre** (BBC-2) play on the artist's life – the first that I know of – so tame and disappointing?

There are lots of reasons, but the most cogent is to do with the first category, namely the director's vision of what early 20th-century Vienna looked like. It was all extremely pretty and fetching, beautifully composed and shot in that soupy, grainy light beloved of soft-porn calendar purveyors, which is usually achieved by half an inch of vaseline on the lens or wrapping the camera in several yards of butter muslin. Furthermore, nearly all the apartments or studios we were vouchsafed glimpses of appeared not only to be amazingly sparsely furnished – the odd tasteful chair in an expanse of empty floor – but also astonishingly white. The walls breathed fresh paint and luminosity. Plonk the actors down in this setting, dress them in immaculate clothes – always so much better fitting than they ever were in reality – and you constantly expect them to whip out a bottle of Dubonnet or Mateus Rosé rather than a paintbrush or stick of charcoal.

The play dutifully followed the course of Egon's troubled life. We saw him rebelling against the fusty traditionalism of the Acadamy, paying homage to Klimt – something of a gay old dog by this account, sporting a kaftan and surrounded by naked models – and setting up a variety of studios in which he was persecuted by intolerant locals and in which a number of famous Schiele paintings and drawings were cleverly and almost identically recreated – though these omitted, I'm happy to report, the notorious 'Self-Portrait of the Artist Masturbating'.

Various controversial features of Schiele's life were referred to only tangentially. For example, to what extent was Schiele a lusting nympholept? And did his behaviour exhibit any real signs of insanity beyond the usual artistic self-obsession and compulsive need to *épater les bourgeois?* There's fairly strong evidence for the latter question to be answered in the affirmative, though the only time it was raised was when his long-time model and mistress accused him of being off his rocker when he dumped her for the daughter of a near-neighbour. Also, anyone unfamiliar with the artist's life would have been baffled by the rushed juxtaposition of images from his last years when, after a languid – not to say plodding – progression Schiele got married, achieved success, was called up, received the news of his mistress's death

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and suddenly died himself. The death-bed scene came as a particular jolt, for up to that point he had seemed in fine fettle. No reference was made to the fact that Schiele, along with hundreds of thousands of others, had fallen victim to the Spanish flu epidemic that swept the world at the end of the First World War. Curious.

THINGS WEREN'T HELPED by the fact that the actor playing Schiele (Felix Mitter) bore a striking resemblance to Hansi Müller, the West German centre-half, and along with the rest of the cast was obliged to speak lines (and one didn't require the subtitles to determine this) of classic leadenness. '*You* are the traitor to Art, you kitsch-manufacturer!' young Egon bellowed at his pompous professor. It wouldn't have been out of place in Sheridan's **The Critic**, BBC-1's Play of the Month, or, to be more precise, in the wonderfully appalling play within a play, *The Spanish Armada,* which took up most of the second half. Funny though this was – dog-Shakespeare at its most execrable and opportunist – it could have benefitted from some cutting. But this is my only criticism of what was a splendid production, with immaculate comic performances from all the cast, but particularly the principals, Norman Rodway, Nigel Hawthorne and Hywel Bennett, the latter now surely established as a major acting talent with formidable range.

The play was a robust satire on Sheridan's theatrical world and it managed to transcend what might be thought its somewhat limited and precisely contemporary references. It contained, in addition, the most accomplished and hilarious comic scenes since some of Ian Richardson's performances in *Private Schultz*. These featured the late Alan Badel and Nigel Hawthorne as respectively, Sir Fretful Plagiary, a playwright, and Mr Sneer, a critic. Sir Fretful claims that he cares not a jot for the critics, so Sneer invents a notice – allegedly printed in the previous day's paper – of one of Sir Fretful's plays, and improvises a savage attack while Sir Fretful gamely forces a series of ostensibly merry laughs, which lamentably fail to conceal his seething anger and fury. Consummate acting and marvellously effective.

The critics, of course, get a very bad press from Sheridan. Everyone seems riven with malice, self-interest and hypocrisy, which is, naturally, a shameful slander on a noble profession. As an example of the public service we provide it might just be worth noting that, as a result of the critical mauling it received – and, doubtless, terrible ratings – *Sin on Saturday* has been scrapped, with five projected shows still to run. □

NEW STATESMAN INDEX

The index to Vol. 102 (July-December 1981) is available, price £1.25 post free, from the publisher: 10 Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ.

The index to Vol. 103 (January-June 1982) will be available in September.

FILMS: John Preston

Plumbing depths

36 Chowringhee Lane (A) *Gate*
The Thing (X) *ABC Shaftesbury Avenue, Plaza*
Conan the Barbarian (AA) *Leicester Square Theatre*
Who Dares Wins (AA) *Odeon Leicester Square*

36 Chowringhee Lane is the first Indian film to have been directed by a woman, Aparna Sen (no relation to Mrinal), and it also brings Jennifer Kendal back to the screen in her first English-speaking role since *Bombay Talkie* in 1969. She plays a lonely, elderly Anglo-Indian spinster, Miss Stoneham, who teaches Shakespeare to a class of inattentive children and lives in a rundown two-room flat with her cat, Sir Toby Belch. It is a life devoid of excitement, incident or friendship but then she bumps into a former pupil and her boyfriend. He is sly and vain, she more decent but besotted and what they are looking for is a little afternoon love nest.

Miss Stoneham's place fits the bill perfectly and she readily agrees to the idea when the boyfriend makes out that he's an aspiring author who needs somewhere to write. Whereas a similar arrangement nearly drove Jack Lemmon to suicide in *The Apartment,* Miss Stoneham is only too glad to of the intrusion, even when she finds out she has been duped. But eventually the couple marry, move out and have no further use for her.

It is a portrait, not of rank callousness, but of simple disregard for another's feelings and all the more effective since Miss Stoneham seems bound to get on anyone's nerves – and what's more she knows it – wittering away in her curious singsong voice. The movie is not without faults, being a good 20 minutes too long, and the pathos is ladled on a bit thick at times, but it is handled, for the most part, with a great deal of charm and delicacy. The performances are all good and Ms Kendal is quite marvellous. Behind a face tinged with terrible sadness there is clearly a mind aching to be allowed to have fun.

John Carpenter's **The Thing** is a remake of Howard Hawks's 1951 film *The Thing From Another World*, which in turn was based upon John W. Campbell's '30s novella *Who Goes There?* Kurt Russell, looking like a resurrected Jim Morrison in a hat poached from Deputy Dawg, stars as a meteorologist cooped up for the winter on an Antarctic weather station. Peace there is soon disturbed by the arrival of the Thing, whose party trick is to adopt the form of any creature it wants, making it hard to tell just who's been taken over. The original Hawks *Thing* looked distinctly ropy – even the hero referred to it as a walking carrot – so no expense has been spared in making this one. The special effects are, indeed, quite extraordinary but the trouble is that Carpenter is patently no Hawks and he hasn't done himself any favours by trying to improve on the earlier version. The characterisation is particularly weak and the action tends to plod rather whenever the Thing is taking a nap or lying low. Nevertheless, there are enough scarey moments to make a visit worthwhile even though the ending is left wide open.

Of the week's other two releases the first, as director and co-writer John Milius has boasted, would probably have been admired by Hitler, while the second seems to me to be the most politically reprehensible and technically shoddy film to have emerged from a British studio in years. **Conan the Barbarian** also started life, appropriately enough, in the '30s, as a comic strip in *Weird Tales* magazine. The screen version of Conan's exploits begins ominously with a crackpot quotation from Nietzsche, 'That which does not kill us makes us stronger'. It's set in the mythical Hyborean Age where young Conan sees his mother being decapitated and is then thrown into slavery – all good character-forming stuff according to Milius. There he grows into five times Mr Universe Arnold Schwarzenegger, the man with the demon deltoids who can hoof a footful of sand into any seven stone weakling's face from 50 paces. This, in one form or another, is what he spends most of the film doing as he works his way up to champion gladiator and goes off in search of the man who murdered his mum. Racism now takes a bow, as the guilty party is religious nut Thulsa Doom, played by the only black actor in the cast, James Earl Jones. Just in case anyone misses the point, Doom has a habit of changing into a snake thus making him not only black but slimy too. Fortunately, the chances of anyone taking this at all seriously, much less granting it any kind of political credibility, are negligible since the film is abominably bad.

There's another sure sign of trouble ahead in **Who Dares Wins** which opens with that old '60s favourite, the London montage. Having drummed it into everybody, at least everybody who knows what Big Ben looks like, that the film is set in London it then gets on with glorifying the SAS. Lewis Collins plays an SAS officer who is assigned to infiltrate a group of terrorists so irredeemably depraved and misguided that they want unilateral nuclear disarmament. Working from within the CND, the People's Lobby (*sic*) plan to occupy the US Ambassador's residence and hold everyone hostage, including the Secretary of State and our very own Home Secretary. The film clearly implies that those members of the CND who aren't actually gun-toting loonies are so wimpish as to be beneath contempt. It falls to Judy Davis as leader of the People's Lobby to put the case for nuclear disarmament. Needless to say she becomes conveniently tongue-tied and ends up being so feebly unpersuasive that a three-year-old could knock holes in her argument. Nothing for it but to send in the SAS who abseil down from their helicopters and show us what they're made of. Ian Sharp directs with no sign of any flair at all. □

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WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2734 **Set by Ned Blatherskite**

Odes to Autumn, please, in the style of any modern poet: 14 lines max by 10 Sept. It's been done before? Course it has: do it again.

No 2731 **Set by May Day**

'Dear Bill' letters from Mrs. T to an imaginary crony – 'Dear Myrtle', perhaps.

Report **By Jack Russell**

The trick here was to find a Maggiean analogue of Denis-speak, not merely do a Denis in drag. To those who came closest, a crinkly Duke apiece. Gung-ho!

Dear Myrtle, How *are* you, and how is dear old Grantham? My goodness, it *does* seem an age since you and I were senior prefects together! And yet, you know, one's present task is not so very different – Francis, Willie and the rest are really rather like wayward schoolboys who only lack a little backbone! How well I remember your description of my Founder's Day speech: 'Churchillian'. We laughed, and yet looking at the events of recent months . . . Truth is indeed stranger than fiction! Do you believe in Destiny, Myrtle? Well, I have 'affairs of state' to attend to, as we say in Westminster, so I must leave you. *So* looking forward to your 'newsy' Christmas letter. PETER NORMAN

Dear Myrtle, A card from Switzerland for you to treasure! Managed to shed the Millstone for a day by telling him there was free tipple on the Eiger for all who ski to the top. What a relief not to have him breathing down my neck like Time's winged chariot wherever I go. (There's a quotation there, by the way, dear. I wonder if you can spot it.) Things here have been a trifle tarnished by the sudden arrival of two unemployed factory types, wandering about in Tesco outfits and mumbling like an episode of *Crossroads* at half-speed. Honestly Myrtle, I could spit! It's *exactly* what I try to avoid at home. *Typical* Swiss spinelessness to allow them in, mind you.
N. J. WARBURTON

Dear Myrtle, D. suggested I should change my name by deed poll to Helen. The penny didn't drop till he explained all that about Helen launching a thousand ships. Nice thought, but she was a foreigner (and wasn't there something about her going topless?) so I said, 'What about Boadicea?' He laughed and said I couldn't say Boadicea to a Goose Green. Bad taste, I felt. I reckon if I slowed down the repatriation rate to about two service-men per day (with affecting reunions on TV, of course) I could prolong the F. Factor almost indefinitely – at least till the next general election. What do you think? See you under the drier Friday. Gung-ho!
STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

Dear Myrtle, Desperately worried about Denis who ricochets between fiercely resenting the image of him projected by that wretched Whitehall farce (Wells grandson of H.G., I'm told– *another* bloody socialist!) and as furiously trying to live up to it – caught him the other day rehearsing in front of a video of the show pirated by the Major from the Upper Circle – but of course his timing's all to hell and the fruitiness just isn't there. Was I wise, I wonder now, in saddling myself with this dreary little Burmah oil-man? Seemed at the time the right kind of subfusc background for Annual Conference – with the Tories picking the right husband is almost as important as picking the right hat – but beginning to hae my doots . . . RUFUS STONE

FIRST PERSON

Patrice Chaplin

Anybody out there listening?

In place of Hannah Wright, the NS *will be running a guest column for some weeks. Patrice Chaplin is the author of three novels and has written extensively for radio, TV and the cinema.*

'IT'S A little-known fact that a large proportion of Radio 4 listeners are in their fifties', said a radio producer at the BBC. Having just watched my third play for Radio 4 being produced, I felt a stirring of disquiet.

'How *many* fifty-year-olds actually?' I asked.

He wasn't sure. 'It's a little-known fact that the average radio listener is definitely a casual listener.'

The first joy of acceptance was long over; also the dubious thrill of seeing one's work being performed. I felt in need of some of these little-known facts myself. What value did months of writing plays actually have? How effective is the medium? What were the limitations and advantages of the market in which I worked?

As far as I am concerned, having worked in film, television and radio, the last is definitely the most respectful to the author. The BBC cherishes its writers. The producers are excellent editorially and can be trusted to improve a script. A radio play is the nearest thing stylistically to a novel, and perhaps that's why so many novelists prefer this medium. In television and film, the word is by no means the most important constituent. The writer is in constant competition with everybody's favourite, the camera. 'You don't need all those lines, dear. The camera can say that. Why put dialogue there? You'll spoil the shot.'

Radio offers a writer security. If a play is commissioned, it's produced and it's heard, if only by a shifting minority of fifty-year-olds. Television cannot guarantee this. Film is worse. The writing, or 'product' as it's known in these circles, frequently finds itself stored for the right slot, the right director. Then comes a change of policy, a drop in the bank balance and, homeless, the product goes from hand to hand on diminishing options or is shelved along with rival reels of celluloid. The other advantage of radio is that the actors are invariably excellent. It's a medium specially favoured by well-known actors with long runs who long for change. Three to four days in the studio fits in well with theatre performances.

The radio play business is certainly old-fashioned. Broadcasting House reeks of the Forties and Fifties and is considered 'quaint'. Does this have an effect on production and audience? Cherry Cookson, one of the busiest radio producers (25 to 30 plays a year), believes the atmosphere, still redolent of radio's heyday, does in an inexplicable way direct the work that's done today:

> What we do does reflect the personality of that old building and all those programmes that have been made in the past, yet I don't think it's a disadvantage. I've worked in very posh offices in TV, but I'm much happier in Broadcasting House. I think having too much money and too elegant surroundings doesn't work for radio. I'd be pleased with better facilities in the studio because we're all familiar with 'tube trains' and machines breaking down. One actor who came in recently actually thought the microphone standing in the middle of the studio was an exhibition piece left there as an inspiration. He was deeply surprised when, minutes later, he had to act on it. I don't think I'd be the same in a bright new building with open plan offices.

Which is indeed what she may get if the new building goes ahead. Rumour, a common means of communication in the BBC, has it that the proposed site is that on which the present Langham building stands.

Cherry would like to extend the age range of Radio 4 listeners, but 'one of the main problems is freedom of speech'. She would like to do plays that reflect the language of today: 'This is a view shared by us all, but if you had a play using naturalistic dialogue it wouldn't be allowed.' Not allowed by whom? She was reticent, thinking perhaps of the building itself, full of the ghosts of 'Dick Barton' and 'Mrs Dale's Diary' . . . 'I think there are as many people writing in saying the plays should reflect contemporary attitudes as those who write, "Shocked! Horrified! Tunbridge Wells." The trouble is, these letters don't get as much publicity.'

The basis of the censorship argument in the media generally (and this, Cherry informs me, is something to which the BBC pays more than lip service) is choice:

> There is this rather peculiar idea that a person in his own home has no choice. Apparently, he or she has no right to switch off. They're in a supposedly passive state and obliged to see televised scenes of horror or hear the most violent words on the radio. This is where censorship, or if you want a kinder word, caution, creeps in. And when you consider the average age of the Radio 4 listener, it's not surprising this extreme circumspection is encouraged.

But in spite of censorship and the competition of television, thousands of scripts arrive at Broadcasting House each year. Cherry has read 8,000 in three years and now wears glasses on top of contact lenses.

Before I began writing for radio, one aspect bothered me and it still does. Often, the voices sound the same and it's hard to know who's talking. Cherry again:

> I think that's perfectly fair criticism. You can correct it a bit in the studio by convincing the writer a character should switch into Northumberland dialect. Or if an actor has a vocal range he can shift up and down accordingly. Also the casual listener is often only interested in a good story line and doesn't care much about the nuances and acoustics and little beauties that we try to put in. There *is* a problem and one can't be cosy about it. People have lost the listening habit. □

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LONDON W8. Notting Hill Children's Carnival. Carnival King & Queen. Music, dance, fun, food, drink. Adults £1. Kids 50p. Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street. Tel. **01-602 3252 ext. 288.**

SUN 29 AUGUST

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TUES 31 AUGUST

LONDON SW1. Rally to support SOLIDARNOSC. Labour & Solidarity speakers. 6 p.m. Speakers Corner, Hyde Park.

WED 1 SEPT

LONDON SW1. 'Euro-elections' — Richard Balfe, MEP. Cent Lond. Fabian Soc. County Hall. 7.30 p.m.
LONDON SW1. 'NEWSPIX: CARTOONISTS' VIEWS OF THE NEWS'. Noon-9 p.m. until 3 October (except Mons.). ICA Concourse Gallery, The Mall.

THURS 2 SEPT

LONDON SW1. Tony Benn in Conversation with his biographer Alan Freeman. £1.25. 1 p.m. ICA Cinema, The Mall. **Tel: 01-930 3647.**

FRI 3 SEPT

LONDON WC1. Film — 'The Patriot Game'. 70p (30p u/w). 7.30 p.m. Holborn Central Library, 32/38 Theobalds Road, N. London. Irish Solidarity Committee.
3-5 SEPTEMBER, HERTS. CND Campaign Training Skills Weekend. £7. Canon Frome, Ledbury. Details: **0272 513631.**

SAT 4 SEPTEMBER

LONDON E2. E. London CND. Sizewell Stomp with Dolly Mixtures, Jim Barclay, Walking Wounded, Reddy Rubbed. £2 (£1 u/w). Poplar Civic Hall, Bow Road.
4-5 SEPTEMBER, ALFRISTON, SUSSEX. English Vineyard Wine Festival. Noon-6 pm. £3. English Wine Centre, Drusillas Corner. **0323 870532.**
4-6 SEPTEMBER, LONDON to BRIGHTON. — Workers March Against Racism from Brick Lane to TUC Conference in Brighton. Details **01-274 3951. W.A.R.**

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5 SEPTEMBER, BRIGHTON. 'Film & Psychoanalysis' series — 'Sigmund Freud's Dora' (Pajaczkowska). £1.50 (£1 u/w). 7 p.m. Hanover Centre, Southover Street.
5 SEPTEMBER, LIVERPOOL. Event — 'Liberty Hall' with Babylon Rebels & Open Mind. 8 p.m. Stanley House Community Centre, Upper Parliament Street.
5 SEPTEMBER, BRIGHTON. 'Voices for Peace & Liberation' Rally. 7 p.m. The Pavilion Theatre, New Road.
6 SEPTEMBER, LONDON W1. 'Ladies and Nurses in the Crimean War.' History Workshop Seminar. 6.45pm. Upstairs at the Black Horse, 6 Rathbone Place.
7 SEPTEMBER, LEICESTER. Film 'A Better Road to Peace' plus talk on Civil Defence. 7.30 p.m. Blackfriars Hall, Wellington Street, Leicester CND.
7 SEPTEMBER, LONDON E1. Meeting 'Alternative Defence Strategy' with Dan Smith. 7.30 p.m. THAP Bookshop, 178 Whitechapel Road. T. H. Febian Soc.
7 SEPTEMBER, LONDON W5. Ealing Labour Party meeting on Poland. 8 p.m. Ealing Town Hall.
8 SEPTEMBER, LONDON NW1. Meeting for unemployed. 10 a.m. Camden Unemployed Action Centre, 102 St Pancras Way.
8 SEPTEMBER, BRIGHTON. Labour Solidarity Campaign Meeting. Speakers: Gwyneth Dunwoody, Roy Hattersley, Peter Shore, Bryan Stanley. 5.15 p.m. Ballroom, Old Ship Hotel.
8 SEPTEMBER, LONDON W8. Poetry. Diana Bishop. 8 p.m. £1. Kensington Bookshop, 140 Church Street.
10-12 SEPTEMBER, LONDON W1. Socialist Society Summer School. 'The Search for a Viable Socialist Programme'. Workshops. Speakers include: Tony Benn, Peter Tatchell, Robin Blackburr, Ken Livingstone and others. Plus evening event. University of London Union, Malet Street. **Tel: 01-734 8561**
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11-12 SEPTEMBER, CARDIFF. Weekend school 'Beyond the Nuclear Free Zone'. Speakers: Frank Barnaby, Duncan Rees and others. Tel: Cardiff CND, **0222-493196.**
14 SEPTEMBER, LONDON W12. W.E.A. Course, "The Personal and the Political". 10 weeks, Tuesdays from 14 Sept. 6.30 pm. Project Enterprise, 23 Askew Cres.
17 SEPTEMBER, LETCHWORTH, HERTS. 'Labour's Programme 1982' — Michael Meacher MP, 8pm. 50p. Brotherhood Hall, Gernon Rd.
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25 SEPTEMBER, MANCHESTER. 'Foreign Policy Implications of British Nuclear Disarmament', Dayschool at Withington Adult Education Centre, Mauldeth Rd., M14. 10am-4pm. Details: 59 Tintern Ave., Manchester M20 8ND.
1 OCTOBER, LONDONDERRY. Goldsmiths' Holography Workshop. A touring show of Holograms opens at the Orchard Gallery. Details: **01-733 3716.**
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2 OCTOBER, SHEFFIELD. 'The Peace Movement after the Falklands' Public meeting. Speakers include E. P. Thompson, Kate Soper, Richard Carbon MEP, Jean McCrindle. 7.30 p.m. City Hall. **0742-615369.**
4 OCTOBER, LONDON W1. 'A Social Democratic Interpretation of History' — Peter Clarke. History Workshop seminar. 6.45 p.m., Upstairs at the 'Black Horse', 6 Rathbone Place.
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Recent floods devastated northern Nicaragua causing £200m. damage (UN figures).

UNNATURAL DISASTER:

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